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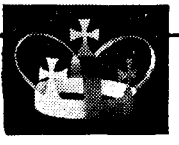

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A new collection of essays by KENNETH BURKE will be published in the autumn by the University of California Press.

PHILIP LEVINE, whose home is in Fresno, California, is at present living in Spain. This is his first appearance in THE HUDSON REVIEW.

HAROLD WITT's "Surprised by Others at Fort Cronkhite" will be the title poem of his new book.

DANIEL HOFFMAN joins the English Department of the University of Pennsylvania in July. His most recent book of verse is *The City of Satisfactions.*

DAVID WAGONER will be teaching a course in Roethke at the School of Letters at Indiana University this summer.

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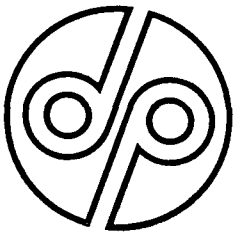

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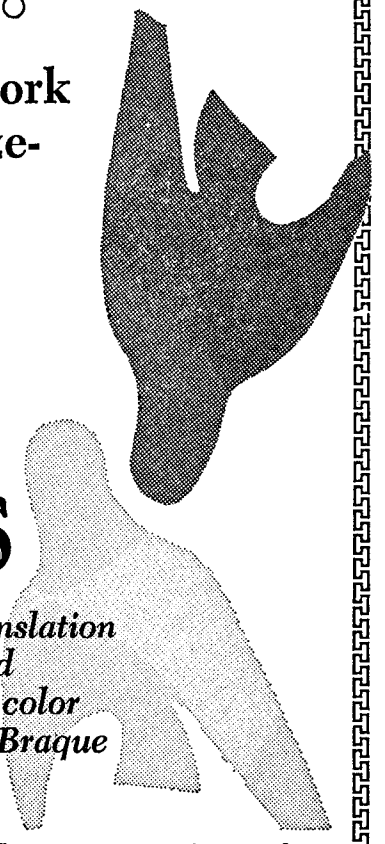

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KENNETH BURKE

Coriolanus—and the Delights of Faction

I

THIS PAPER WILL INVOLVE the safest and surest kind of prophecy; namely: prophecy after the event. Our job will be to ask how Shakespeare's grotesque tragedy, *Coriolanus,* "ought to be." And we can check on the correctness of our prophecies by consulting the text.

We begin with these assumptions: Since the work is a tragedy, it will require some kind of symbolic action in which some notable form of victimage is imitated, for the purgation, or edification of an audience. The character that is to be sacrificed must be fit for his role as victim; and everything must so fit together that the audience will find the sacrifice plausible and acceptable (thereby furtively participating in the judgment against the victim, and thus even willing the victimage). The expectations and desires of the audience will be shaped by conditions within the play. But the topics exploited for persuasive purposes *within* the play will also have strategic relevance to kinds of "values" and "tensions" that prevail *outside* the play.

There is a benign perversity operating here. In one sense, the aesthetic and the ethical coincide, since a way of life gives rise to a moral code, and the dramatist can exploit this moral code for poetic effects by building up characters that variously exemplify the system of vices and virtues to which the code explicitly or implicitly subscribes. But in another sense, the aesthetic and the ethical are at odds, since the dramatist can transform our moral problems into sources of poetic entertainment. Any ethical "thou shalt not" sets up the conditions for an author to engage an audience by depicting characters that variously violate or threaten to violate the "thou shalt not." And many motivational conflicts that might distress us in real life can be transformed into kinds of poetic imitation that engross us. Thus in the realm of the aes-

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thetic we may be delighted by accounts of distress and corruption that would make the moralist quite miserable.

The moral problem, or social tension, that is here to be exploited for the production of the "tragic pleasure" is purely and simply a kind of discord intrinsic to the distinction between upper classes and lower classes. However, a certain "distance" could be got in Shakespeare's day by treating the problem in terms not of contemporary London but of ancient Rome. A somewhat analogous situation is to be seen in Euripides' tragedy of *The Trojan Women,* which appeared some months after the Athenians had destroyed the little island of Melos, though on its face the play was concerned with the Trojan war, the theme of the *Iliad.* When *Coriolanus* appeared, there had been a long history of suffering due to the Enclosure Acts by which many tenants had been dispossessed of their traditional rights to the land; and a year or two before, there had been a riot. Both of these plays may, in their way, have gained strictly contemporary relevance from the allusive exploiting of a "timely topic." But in any case, each was dealing with a distress of much longer duration, in Euripides' case the horrors of war, and in Shakespeare's case the *malaise* of the conflict between the privileged and the under-privileged, as stated in terms of a struggle between the patricians and plebeians of old Rome.

If we are going to "dramatize" such a tension, we shall want first of all a kind of character who in some way helps *intensify* the tension. Where there are any marked differences in social status, in the situation itself there is a kind of "built-in pride," no matter how carefully one might try to mitigate such contrasts. And despite polite attempts to gloss things over, the unresolved situation is intrinsically there. By the nature of the case, it involves *exclusions.*

But for our purposes the main consideration is this: Whereas a hostess, or a diplomat, or an ingratiating politician, or a public relations counsel might go as far as possible towards *toning down* such situations, the dramatist must work his cures by a quite different method. He must find ways to *play them up.* In some respect, therefore, this play will require a kind of character who is designed to help aggravate the uneasiness of the relationship between nobles and commoners.

For this aspect of his role, our chosen victim is obviously a per-

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fect fit. In contrast with the suave Menenius, who has been addressing the mutinous citizens with such a cautious mixture of gravity and humor, our chosen victim's first words to the people are: "What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,/ That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,/ Make yourselves scabs?" Thereafter, again and again, his gruff (or, if you will, arrogant) manner of speaking is designed to point up (for the audience) the conflict intrinsic to the class distinctions with which the play is "drastically" concerned. (It's well to recall here that, in earlier medical usage, a "drastic" was the name for the strongest kind of "cathartic." Also, the word derives etymologically from the same root as "drama.")

The Greek word *hubris* sometimes translates best as "pride," sometimes as "excess." And in Athenian law *hubris* was also used to designate a civil offence, an insulting air of superiority, deemed punishable by death. When you note how neatly all three meanings come together in the role of Coriolanus, I think you will realize at least one reason why I find the play so fascinating. The grotesque hero is *excessively* downright, forthright, outright (and even, after his fashion, upright), in his unquestioned assumption that the common people are intrinsically inferior to the nobility. Indeed, though the word "noble" suggests to most of us *either* moral *or* social connotations, Coriolanus takes it for granted that only the *socially* noble can have nobility of any sort. (The word appears about 76 times in the play. In half of these contexts it is applied to Coriolanus himself. And, to my knowledge, it is never used ironically, as with Mark Antony's transformations of the word "honourable.") Coriolanus is excessive in ways that prepare the audience to relinquish him for his role as scapegoat, in accentuating a trait that the audience also shares with him, though seldom so avowedly.

More "prophesying after the event" is still to be done. But first, perhaps we should pause to give a generalized outline of the plot, having in mind the kind of tension (or factional malaise) that the drama would transform into terms of purgative appeal:

After having gained popular acclaim through prowess in war, a courageous but arrogant patrician, who had been left fatherless when young and was raised by his mother, is persuaded by his mother to sue for high political office. In campaigning, he alienates

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the plebeians who, goaded by his political rivals, condemn him to exile. When in exile, making an alliance with the commander of the armies he had conquered, he leads a force against his own country. But before the decisive battle, during a visit by his closest relatives, his mother persuades him not to attack. In so doing, she unintentionally sets in motion the conditions whereby the allied commander, whom he had formerly vanquished and who envies his fame, successfully plots his assassination.[1]

It is impressive how perfectly the chosen victim's virtues and vices work together, in fitting him for his sacrificial function. The several scenes in the first act that build up his prowess as a soldier not only endow him with a sufficient measure of the heroics necessary for tragic dignification. They also serve to make it clear why, when he returns to Rome and, against his will, consents to seek the office of consul, he is bound to be a misfit. Shakespeare himself usually gives us the formula for such matters. It is stated by the Tribune, Brutus, in III, iii: Get him angry, for

> He hath been used
> Ever to conquer, and to have his worth
> Of contradiction. Being once chafed, he cannot

[1] To bring out the steps of the plot by proposing titles for the five acts:

I. "Coriolanus Gets His Name." Or, "His Mother's Son." The first three scenes establish successively: his arrogance towards the people, his rivalry with Aufidius, his relation to his mother. The rest establish his prowess as a warrior (by the sacrifice of supernumerary victims)—and at the end, Aufidius sets the arrows of our expectation by telling of his resolve to dispose of our hero, in whatever way he can.

II. "The People's Misgivings." Or, "The Tribunes Start Trouble." "Know, good mother,/ I had rather be their servant in my way/ Than sway them in theirs." (He, who is at home with force, can't petition. He can't capitalize on his valor by displaying his wounds.) Here petition, as a form of persuasion, is presented in a bad light. It is the trade of the Tribunes. (Quite different from Socrates' prayers to Peitho.)

III. "Coriolanus Banished." Or, "Coriolanus Banishes His Banishers." In the first scene, Menenius gives us the formula: "He has been bred i' th' wars/ . . . and is ill schooled/ In bolted language." ("Bolted" means "sifted," "refined.") When he says, in the second scene, "The word is 'mildly,'" things are set up for his fatal outburst of rage.

IV. "Coriolanus and Aufidius Allied." Or, "Alliance With the Enemy." This being, as usual, the pity act in a Shakespearean tragedy, there is the poignancy of Coriolanus' departure. As regards the pointing of the arrows, all comes to a focus in Aufidius' aside: "When, Caius, Rome is thine,/ Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine."

V. "The Fatal Petition." Now the theme of supplication comes to fulfillment. But ironically. For Coriolanus, who has been an ineffective suppliant, yields to his mother's entreaties, and thereby helps set up the situation that leads to his death.

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> Be reined again to temperance; then he speaks
> What's in his heart, and that is there which looks
> With us to break his neck.

He is not the "war games" kind of military man, not the "computer mentality"; thus we spontaneously accept it that his valiant though somewhat swashbuckling ways as a warrior will make him incompetent in the wiles of peaceful persuasion, which the wily Shakespeare so persuasively puts in a bad light, *within* the conditions of the play, by his treatment of the Tribunes. Though Shakespeare's theatre is, from start to finish, a masterful enterprise in the arts of persuasion, high among his resources is the building of characters who are weak in such devices. Indeed, considered from this point of view, Coriolanus' bluntness is in the same class with Cordelia's fatal inability to flatter Lear. Later we shall find other reasons to think of Lear in connection with Coriolanus' railings. Meanwhile, note how the Tribunes' skill at petition is portrayed as not much better than mere cunning, even though somewhat justified by our high-born goat's arrogance in his dealings with the commoners. He finds it impossible even to simulate an attitude of deference. And once we have his number, when he sets out to supplicate, armed with the slogan, "The word is 'mildly,' " the resources of dramatic irony have already prepared us for the furious outbursts that will get the impetuous war-hero banished from Rome, a climax capped perfectly by his quick rejoinder, "I banish you!" As a fearless fighter, he is trained to give commands and to risk his life, not to supplicate. And the better to build him up, in the role of the Tribunes Shakespeare makes the art of political supplication seem quite unsavory.

All told, Coriolanus' courage and outspokenness make him a sufficiently "noble" character to dignify a play by the sacrificing of him. And excessive ways of constantly reaffirming his assumption that only the *social* nobility can be *morally* noble indicts him for sacrifice. But more than this is needed to make him effectively yieldable.

For one thing, always in drama we encounter a variation on the theme of what I would call the "paradox of substance." A character cannot "be himself" unless many others among the *dramatis personae* contribute to this end, so that the very essence of a char-

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acter's nature is in a large measure defined, or determined, by the other characters who variously assist or oppose him. The most obvious instance of what I mean is the role of Aufidius. If it is an integral part of Coriolanus' role to be slain, there must be a slayer. And in this sense Aufidius is "derived from" the character of Coriolanus. The conditions of the play set up Coriolanus as a gerundive, a "to be killed," and Aufidius is to be primary instrument in the killing. As is typical of a Shakespearean play, just before the close of the first act Aufidius points the arrows of the audience's expectations by announcing to a soldier (and thus to the audience) that he will destroy Coriolanus in whatever way possible. Even so, it's always good if a man speaks with high respect of a slain rival; accordingly, though Aufidius must be plotter enough to fulfill his role in Coriolanus' death, he must be of sufficient dignity so that his final tribute to the "noble memory" of Coriolanus will serve to give the audience a parting reassurance that they have participated in the symbolic sacrifice of a victim worth the killing. The assurance was made doubly necessary by the fact that, just before the slaying, there had been a kind of last-moment revelation, when Aufidius called the bold warrior a "boy of tears," thus propounding a final formula for Coriolanus' relationship to his mother. Aufidius' claims as a worthy opponent (despite his unsavory traits) are established in Coriolanus' first references to him, such as, "I sin in envying his nobility," and "He is a lion/ That I am proud to hunt."

This relationship we should dwell on. For it best illustrates just what we mean by "prophesying after the event" in order to "derive" the play in terms of poetics. If the characters are viewed simply as "people," we should treat the relationship between Coriolanus and Volumnia much as Plutarch did, in the "Life" from which Shakespeare borrowed so much of his plot. Coriolanus would thus be interpreted as the offspring of a bellicose, overbearing mother, who sought to compensate for the death of his father by being both mother and father to him. There is one change worth noting. Whereas Plutarch attributes Coriolanus' resultant irritability to womanishness, Shakespeare seems to have settled for a mere failure to outgrow boyishness. But our main point is this: Along the lines of poetic principles, the derivation should be reversed; and instead of viewing Coriolanus as an off-

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spring of his mother, we view her role as a function contributory to his.

Thus, in an early scene, she is portrayed as a pugnacious virago of whom the son became a responsive masculine copy. This portrait of her prepares us to accept it as "natural" that, when he returns from the battlefields, *she* can persuade him, against his wishes, to stand for consul. And thus, later in the play, we will accept it that *she* can persuade him not to attack Rome—and (quite unintentionally on her part) this decision sets up the conditions responsible for his death. In brief, when using her to account for Coriolanus' character in the first place, Shakespeare is preparing her to serve as plausible explanation for two crucial moments in the *plot:* a non-political man's ventures into politics, and a fighting man's failure to join in battle when success was certain. In brief, her relation to Coriolanus motivates for us two decisions of his that are basically necessary, to make the *turns* in the tragedy seem plausible.

(I say "turns," having in mind the Aristotelian word, "peripety," to name the striking moment, near the center of a complex plot, when some significant reversal takes place. But I might here pause to note that this is a play of many such reversals. In Act I, there are the many scenes that might in general be entitled the "Tides of Battle," including the one where Coriolanus—or at that time, Caius Marcius, since he has not yet received his new name from the city he conquered—is thought to be lost, through having single-handedly pursued the enemy within the gate of Corioli, fighting alone where Plutarch less theatrically had reported him as but leader of a small band. At the end of Act II, the commoners are persuaded by the Tribunes to retract their intention of voting for Coriolanus as consul. The big peripety is, as one might expect, in Act III, the hero's fatal bursts of rage having been prepared for ironically by his decision to be mild. In this act, there is a kind of peripety-atop-peripety, when Coriolanus retorts to his banishers, "I banish you!"

In Act IV, scene v, there is a neat turn when Aufidius' servingmen, who would treat him shabbily when he first appears, abruptly change their tune after he has talked with Aufidius, and the compact against Rome has been agreed on. Besides being one of the few comic spots in the play, this scene is also useful in pre-

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paring for the last fatal reversal, since it brings out the fact that, even if Coriolanus and Aufidius are to become allies, Coriolanus' reputation is a threat to Aufidius. Another reversal, in scene vi, occurs when, just after the Tribunes and citizens have been congratulating themselves on the conditions of peace resulting from Coriolanus' banishment, they are startled by the news that Coriolanus is marching on Rome.

In Act V, there is a fatal peripety, when Coriolanus is persuaded by his mother to give up his intention of attacking Rome. This leads to another peripety, the ironic twist whereby, soon after Menenius has explained to one of the Tribunes that Coriolanus will never yield ("There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger"), they learn that Coriolanus has begun to withdraw. And even though the arrows of our expectations were clearly pointing in this direction, there is a final peripety in the hero's slaying.)

Coriolanus' wife, Virgilia, is quickly "derivable." In contrast with his continual bluster, she is his "gracious silence." Contrasting with his blood-thirsty mother, she faints at the very mention of blood. In her sensitiveness and devotion, she is by implication a vote for Coriolanus. There's a skillful touch, in IV, ii, where she flares up for a moment against the Tribunes, and boasts of her husband as a fighter: "He'ld make an end of thy posterity." There's a different twist, but surely conceived in the spirit of the same theatre, when the young son (who is a chip off the old block, and loved to rip apart a butterfly) flares up at his father. The most notable thing about Valeria, from the standpoint of Shakespearean dramaturgy, is the fact that, though this friend of the family serves well for handling the relation between mother-in-law and daughter, she has a much less active role in the play than she does in Plutarch. For in Plutarch, *she* suggests that the women go to plead with Coriolanus and dissuade him from attacking Rome, whereas the whole musculature of Shakespeare's play requires maximum stress upon his mother's role in this development. The two Generals (Titus Lartius and Cominius) are "derivable" from Coriolanus in the sense that, both being men of high repute, their constant respect for him speaks for him. Also, his loyalty to them serves to establish it that he is not avid for dictatorial power, but genuinely represents an integral conflict be-

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tween patricians and plebeians. (Shakespeare's formula for Coriolanus' treatment of the commoners had been summed up by a minor character thus: "He seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him.") The citizens have the mixture of distress, resentment, and instability that enables them to help Coriolanus get into the kind of quandaries necessary for him to enact his role. As for the Tribunes, besides their function in making Coriolanus' bluster look admirable in comparison with their scheming, they serve to carry the play forward by goading him into the rage that leads to his banishment, and thus eventually (as one thing leads to another) to his death. All told, in being the kind of characters they are, the other figures help Coriolanus be the kind of character he is; and by their actions at precisely the times when they do act, they help lead the appointed (or stylistically anointed) victim to the decision required, by the logic of the plot, for his downfall. He must turn the army away from Rome, and under conditions that lead step by step to the sacrifice that will permit the purging of the audience.

But we have not yet considered the remarkable function of Menenius. At first glance, one could "derive" him from Coriolanus only in the sense that he serves as the ideal link between the patrician and plebeian factions. In this role, along with his loyalty to Coriolanus, he serves particularly well for shaping the audience's sympathies. For though he is a patrician, and frankly shares the prejudices of his class, nonetheless the commoners (and the audience) like him. His use in this regard is of crucial importance to the play when, in IV, vi, a messenger brings the news that Coriolanus is leading an army against Rome. To the extent that Rome allusively stood for England, it was not easy to keep the audience sympathetic with a man whose conduct at this point was so close to out-and-out treason (particularly since at so many points in the play he irritates us). But Menenius picks up Cominius' line, placing the blame upon the Tribunes and the people ("O, you have made good work!")—and when two characters of such high repute take this stand, it helps crowd the audience a bit by shifting the emphasis from the *hero's treason* to his *enemies' provocation* (with the bad effects of the provocation being stressed, while the considerations that would justify it were here left unmentioned). The trick was to show the Tribunes and

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the people regretting their decision to banish Coriolanus rather than to let them review their grounds for the banishment. This is excellent dramaturgic maneuvering—for Shakespeare, as is typical of him, is here working with more complex motives than an audience's simplest responses to patriot and traitor.

But Menenius' "derivation" as a function of Coriolanus' sacrifice contains other notable ingredients. Despite the great contrast between the diplomatic eloquence of the self-styled "humorous patrician" (who is Coriolanus' god-father) and the heavy-footed, grotesquely heroic mouthings of the formally inevitable victim (for one is mellow where the other is raw), Menenius applies almost the same formula to them both. Of himself he says, "What I think, I utter, and spend my malice in my breath." The same readiness with the word he attributes to Coriolanus thus: "His heart's his mouth. / What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent." (War itself, elsewhere in the play, is called "sprightly, waking, audible, and full of vent," an expression that could serve also to describe Coriolanus' invective.)

But whereas Menenius shares Coriolanus' belief in the intrinsic superiority of the patricians, and makes no secret of the fact even when addressing the commoners, his function will be to uphold circumspectly, "reasonably," much the same position that Coriolanus must represent exorbitantly. (I say, "must" because his excessiveness is a formal requirement of his role as victim.) He is the only character in the play (except Aufidius' servants) charged with the responsibilities of putting some aspects of this solemn bluster in a comical light.

His early speech likening the body politic to the human body (one of the many themes Shakespeare found in Plutarch, though it was also a standard notion of the times) serves not only to present the attitude of the patricians in the best light (as Coriolanus must present it in the worst). It also sets the conditions for much body imagery throughout the play, particularly images of bodily disease, such as go well with the fact that the body politic is in great disarray. What more relevant than an imagery of bodily diseases in a play dealing with disorders of the body politic? Similarly, since the people are starving, images to do with devouring serve to keep the thought of such conditions hovering about the edges of our consciousness. And the many references to

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animals are so treated as to reënforce the vigorous animality of the underlying situation.

The question of imagery, I submit, should be "derived" thus late in the enterprise. With works of a preponderantly imagistic cast (as in much modern poetry), one might properly *begin* with questions of imagery. But in a drama of this sort, one can most profitably begin with considerations of action and character, afterwards deducing the logic of the imagery from these prior considerations, rather than using the imagery as the "way in."

II

Fundamentally, then, the play exploits to the ends of dramatic entertainment, with corresponding catharsis, the tension intrinsic to a kind of social division, or divisiveness, particularly characteristic of complex societies, but present to some degree in even the simplest modes of living. (I take it that the presence of a priesthood or similar functionaries dealing with things of this world in terms of a "beyond," is on its face evidence that a society is marked by some degree of social differentiation, with corresponding conflicts of interest. And at the very least, even tribes that come closest to a homogeneous way of life are marked by differentiation between the work of men and women or between youth and age.)

This malaise, which affects us all but which in varying degrees and under varying circumstances we attempt to mitigate, is here made insultingly unforgettable. Coriolanus' *hubris* (whether you choose to translate it as "pride" or as "excessiveness") aggravates the situation constantly. And when he dies (after a change of heart that enables us to pity him even while we resent his exaggerated ways of representing our own less admirable susceptibilities, with their corresponding "bad conscience"), he dies as one who has taken on the responsibility and has been appropriately punished. Thereby we are cleansed, thanks to his overstating of our case.

Along with this tension, which is of long duration in societies, I considered the likelihood that, when the play originally appeared, it also exploited a "timely topic," the unrest caused by the Enclosure Acts, when new men of means took over for sheep-raising much land that had traditionally been available to small farm-

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ers, and these "legally" dispossessed tenants were in a state of great frustration. Many were starving while the monopolists were being made into patricians. It was a time when many *nouveaux-riches* were being knighted—and as Aristotle points out, it is *new* fortunes that people particularly resent.

An ironic turn of history has endowed this play with a new kind of "timely topic," owing to the vagaries of current dictatorships. But I would incline to contend that this "new immediacy" is more apparent than real. In the first place, Coriolanus isn't a good fit for the contemporary pattern because the frankness of his dislike for the common people would make him wholly incompetent as a rabble-rouser. A modern demagogue might secretly share Coriolanus' prejudices—but he certainly would not advertise the fact as Coriolanus did. His public heart would bleed for the poor, even while he was secretly shipping state funds to a Swiss bank, against the day when his empire would collapse, and he would flee the country, hoping to spend his last years in luxurious retirement on the Riviera. Presumably our nation is always in danger of pouring considerable funds down such rat-holes. Thus, I feel that the attempt to present *Coriolanus* in the light of modern conditions can never quite succeed, since these conditions tend rather to conceal than to point up the cultural trends underlying its purgative use of the tension between upper and lower classes. Or should we call it a "tension behind the tension"? I have in mind a situation of this sort:

The Renaissance was particularly exercised by Machiavelli because he so accurately represented the transvaluation of values involved in the rise of nationalism. A transvaluation was called for, because *religion* aimed at *universal* virtues, whereas the virtues of *nationalism* would necessarily be *factional,* in so far as they pitted nation against nation. Conduct viewed as vice from the standpoint of universal religious values might readily be viewed as admirable if it helped some interests prevail over others. This twist greatly exercised Machiavelli. But though (from the universal point of view) nations confront one another as factions, from the standpoint of any one nation factionalism is conceived in a narrower sense, with nationalism itself taking over the role of the universal.

In Shakespeare's day, as so many of his plays indicate, the kind of *family* factionalism that went with feudal relationships was be-

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ing transformed into the kind of *class* factionalism that would attain its "perfection" (if we may apply that term to so turbulent a development) in the rise of nationalism, with its drive towards the building of the British Empire. And here Shakespeare tackled this particular tangle of motives in a remarkably direct manner, except of course for the kind of "distance" (with corresponding protection) the play got by treating the subject in terms of ancient Rome rather than his contemporary London.

All told, the motivation splits into four overlapping loci: national, class, family, individual. And in *Coriolanus* we witness a remarkably complex simplification of these issues, dramatically translated into terms of action and character.

Individualism may come and go, but there is a compelling sense in which the individual is always basic. The centrality of the nervous system is such that each of us is unique (each man's steak and his particular toothache being his own and no one else's). And even those who are killed *en masse* nonetheless die one by one. Symbolicity (by assigning proper names and attesting to the rights of private ownership) strongly punctuates this physical kind of individuality. And Shakespeare adds his momentous contribution by building so many plays on the "star" system, with a titular role. I think it is safe to say that *Coriolanus* most thoroughly meets this description. Think of such lines as: "O, me alone! Make you a sword of me?" (I, vi); "Alone I fought in your Corioles walls" (I, vii); "Alone I did it." (V, vi)—or his resolve to stand "As if a man were author of himself" (V, iii)—or a Tribune's grudging tribute to him: "He has no equal" (I, i)—or his own mother's formula: "You are too absolute" (III, ii). And the play backs up such statements by incessantly making him the center of our attention whether he is on the stage or off.

Yet even his name is not his own, but derives from the sacking of a city. And when he is threatening to lead an army against Rome, he does not know himself; and the sympathetic Cominius tells us (V, i) that he "forbade all names./ He was a kind of nothing, titleless,/ Till he had forged himself a name o' th' fire/ of burning Rome"—and that's precisely what, in obedience to his mother's pleadings, he did not do.[2] Incidentally, the longer one

[2] Since he got his name "Coriolanus" from his role in the destruction of Corioli, had he persisted in his campaign against Rome he could have been called none other than "Romanus"!

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works with this text, the more ingenious Shakespeare's invention seems when, just before Coriolanus is killed, he *apologizes* because he had fallen into a rage: "Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time ever/ I was forced to scold." But he is addressing the *lords* of Antium, not the commoners. Shortly thereafter the Conspirators will shout, "Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!" thereby, as they slay, modifying poor impotent Lear's line, "Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!" (IV, vi, 192).

But such considerations bring us to the next locus of motives, the *familial,* which the play brings to a focus in the "mother, wife, child" formula, used variously by Menenius (V, i, 28-29), himself (V, ii, 78), and Volumnia (V, iii, 101), hers being the most effective, when she bewails the sight of him for "Making the mother, wife, and child to see/ The son, the husband, and the father tearing/ His country's bowels out." Yet to say as much is to move us almost as quickly into the realm of *class* and *nation,* since his family identity was so intensely that of a *patrician,* and his individualistic ways of being a patrician had brought him into conflict with all Rome.

Here you confront the true poignancy of his predicament, the formula being: individualistic prowess, made haughty towards the people by his mother's training, and naturally unfit for the ways of peaceful persuasion with regard to the citizenry as a whole. The *class* motive comes to a focus terministically in the manipulations that have to do with the key word, "noble." But the *nation* as motive gets its forceful poignancy when the play so sets things up that Coriolanus maneuvers himself and is maneuvered into a situation whereby this individualistic, mother-motivated, patrician patriot is all set to attack his own country, which at the beginning of the play he had defended with such signal valor, despite his invective against the commoners. As Granville-Barker has well said: "Play and character become truly tragic only when Marcius, to be traitor to Rome, must turn traitor to himself."

Yet, so far as I can see, the treatment of this motivational tangle (individual-family-class-nation) is not in itself "cathartic," unless one uses the term in the Crocean sense rather than the Aristotelian. (That is, I have in mind the kind of relief that results purely from the well-ordered presentation of an entanglement. Such a complexity just *is.* But Shakespeare transforms this mo-

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tionless knot into terms of an irreversible narrative sequence, the "cure" here residing not in a sacrifice as such, but rather in the feeling of "getting somewhere" by the sheer act of expression, *even though the scene centered in conditions when Coriolanus* was totally immobilized, a quite unusual state for so outgoing a character.) My soundest evidence for catharsis of this sort (whereby the sheer unfolding of expression can impart a kind of relief to our kind of animal, that lives by locomotion) is the nusery rhyme:

The grand old Duke of York
He had ten thousand men
He marched them up to the top of the hill
Then he marched them down again.
And when they were up they were up
And when they were down they were down
And when they were only halfway up
They were neither up nor down.

III

I'm among the company of those who would call *Coriolanus* a "grotesque" tragedy. So our final problem is to make clear just wherein its grotesqueness resides, and how this quality might also contribute to its nature as medicinal.

Obviously, in contrast with the typical sacrificial victims of Greek tragedy, Coriolanus rather resembles a character in a satyr-play. He is almost like a throwback to the kind of scurrilities that Aristotle associates with the origins of the tragic iamb, in relation to the traditional metre of lampoons. (See *Poetics* IV.) So some critics have called it a "satiric" tragedy. But "grotesque" seems closer, since Coriolanus is *not* being satirized. The clearest evidence that he is being presented as a *bona fide* hero is the fact that *every* person of good standing in the play admires him or loves him and is loyal to him, despite his excesses. What does all this mean?

Still considering the problem from the standpoint of *tensions* and their exploitation for dramatic effects (that is to say, poetic delight), can we not find another kind of tension exploited here for medicinal purposes? It concerns the function of Coriolanus as a "railer," a master of vituperation. Dramaturgically, such a figure is

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at the very least of service in the sense that, by keeping things stirred up, he enables the dramatist to fish in troubled waters. When a cantankerous character like Coriolanus is on the stage (and Shakespeare turns up many such), there is a categorical guaranty that things will keep on the move. Yet, beyond that sheerly technical convenience (whereby Coriolanus does in one way what Iago does in another, towards keeping a play in motion), there is the possibility that such a role in itself may be curative, as a symbolic remedy for one particular kind of repression typical of most societies.

I might best make my point by quoting some remarks I made elsewhere about another scurrilous tragic victim, Shakespeare's Timon of Athens. There, however, the cut is different. Coriolanus throughout is respectful to the patricians and directs his insults only to the plebeians. But Timon, beginning as a great lover of mankind, ends as a total misanthrope. These paragraphs bear upon Timon's possible appeal as vilifier in the absolute:

> *Invective,* I submit, is a primary "freedom of speech," rooted extra-linguistically in the helpless rage of an infant that states its attitude by utterances wholly unbridled. In this sense, no mode of expression could be more "radical," unless it be the closely allied motive of sheer *lamentation,* undirected wailing. And perhaps the sounds of contentment which an infant makes, when nursing or when being bedded or fondled, mark the pre-articulate origins of a third basic "freedom," *praise.*
>
> Among these three, if rage is the infantile prototype of invective, it is a kind of "freedom" that must soon be subjected to control, once articulacy develops. For though even praise can get one into trouble (for instance, when one happens to praise A's enemy in the presence of A, who happens also to be both powerful and rancorous); and though lamentation can on occasion be equally embarrassing (if one is heard to lament a situation among persons who favor it), invective most directly invites pugnacity, since it is itself a species of pugnacity.
>
> Obviously, the Shakespearean theatre lends itself perfectly to the effects of invective. Coriolanus is an excellent case in point. Even a reader who might loathe his politics cannot but be engrossed by this man's mouthings. Lear also has a strong measure of such appeal, with his impotent senile maledictions that come quite close to the state of man's equally powerless infantile beginnings. . . . And that delightfully run-down aristocrat, Falstaff, delights us by making a game of such exercises.

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Though one has heard much about the repression of sexual motives, in our average dealings invective is the mode of expression most thoroughly repressed. This state of affairs probably contributes considerably to such "cultural" manifestations as the excessive violence on TV, and the popular consumption of crude political oratory. Some primitive tribes set aside a special place where an aggrieved party can go and curse the king without fear of punishment (though if our society had such an accommodation, I'm sure there'd be a secret agent hiding behind every bush). In earlier days the gifted railer was considered invaluable by reason of his expert skill at cursing the forces deemed dangerous to the welfare of the tribe (see on this point some interesting data in Robert C. Elliott's book, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art,* and above all his suggestive and entertaining Appendix on "The Curse"). At the very least, in figures such as Coriolanus we get much of such expressiveness, without the rationale of magic, but under the "controlled conditions" of a drama about political unrest. And if he dies of being so forthright, downright, and outright (if not exactly upright), it's what he "deserved." For as regards the *categorical* appeal of invective, it resides not so much in the particular objects inveighed against, but in the sheer process of inveighing. And Coriolanus, like Timon, has given vent with fatal over-thoroughness to untoward tendencies which, in our "second nature," we have "naturally" learned to repress.

IV

In conclusion, then, where are we? We have been considering Coriolanus' qualifications as a scapegoat, whose symbolic sacrifice is designed to afford an audience pleasure. We have suggested: (1) His primary role as a cathartic vessel resides in the excessiveness with which he forces us to confront the discriminatory motives intrinsic to society as we know it. (2) There is a sheerly "expressive" kind of catharsis in his way of giving form to the complexities of *family, class,* and *national* motives as they come to a focus in the self-conflicts of an *individual.* (3) There is the "curative" function of invective as such, when thus released under controlled conditions that transform the repressed into the expressed, yet do us no damage. And (4) the attempt has been made to consider the "paradox of substance" whereby the chosen

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scapegoat can "be himself" and arrive at the end "proper to his nature" only if many events and other persons "conspire" to this end, the persons by being exactly the kind of persons they are, and the events by developing in the exact order in which they do develop. To sum it all up, then, in a final formula for tragic catharsis: (a formula that I wrote with such a play as *Coriolanus* in mind, though it could be applied *mutatis mutandis* to other texts):[3]

> Take some pervasive unresolved tension typical of a given social order (or of life in general). While maintaining the "thought" of it in its over-all importance, reduce it to terms of personal conflict (conflict between friends, or members of the same family). Feature some prominent figure who, in keeping with his character, though possessing admirable qualities, carries this conflict to excess. Put him in a situation that points up the conflict. Surround him with a cluster of characters whose relations to him and to one another help motivate and accentuate his excesses. So arrange the plot that, after a logically motivated turn, his excesses lead necessarily to his downfall. Finally, suggest that his misfortune will be followed by a promise of general peace.

[3] Originally printed in *Arts in Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963).

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W. D. SNODGRASS

Takeoff

This is your captain. Our altitude is 30,000 ft. and our airspeed is 630 m.p.h. Outside your window it is now 80 below zero.

So soon, far above you;
    Miles and miles away.
I don't know whether I love you
    Or what I need to say.

Down in that rain-swept city
    You lie in bed, somewhere,
Alone. And more's the pity.
    It's 80 below up here

And the world is far more distant
    Than anyone would have thought.
We touched, only an instant;
    We were loving, or were not,

As despair opened or those old
    Hungers beyond all cure.
Well, we were always told
    Some feelings *do* endure.

Who knows where this may finish
    Or why our loves should cross?
Now, let no word diminish
    The loveliness or the loss.

No Use

No doubt this way is best.
No doubt in time I'd learn
To hate you like the rest
I once loved. Like an old

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Shirt we unstitch and turn
Until it's all used out,
This too would turn cold.
No doubt . . . no doubt. . . .

And yet who'd dare think so
And yet dare think? We've been
Through all this; we should know
That man the gods have curst
Can ask and always win
Love, as castaways get
Whole seas to cure their thirst.
And yet . . . and yet. . . .

No use telling us love's
No use. Parched, cracked, the heart
Drains the love it loves
And still thirsts. We still care;
We're spared *that*. We're apart,
Tell me there's no excuse,
No sense to this despair.
No use. No use.

Green Huntsmen

So he has taken you, as trolls
Snatch back their lovely own;
As if, with the twilight failing,
Some sluggish majesty
Rose from the sour lagoon to snag you,
Rapt as a memory, behind
The greened, grained mirror. Silence;
The unblinking pond goes blind.

Still, in the upland meadows, green
Huntsmen huddle around
That twitching in the drenched grass;
They slash the testes, scatter out

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Hair to the heavens' quarters,
    Guts to the yelping hounds.
Thoughtless, loose-tendoned as a dream
    And far, the untouched herd still bounds.

Here, the enormous trees stand
    Around me casting down
Their green into that lightless green
    Of lichens, duckweed, algae,
And those underwater plants that thrive
    In slime and deep disgrace.
I cannot find you. No.
    I cannot see my face.

PHILIP LEVINE

Above It All

Strapped to my seat, I turn
to the thin Air Force major
and ask how far to L.A.
He lifts his sunglasses, stares
down at the ocean slipping
beneath, and says, "50 minutes."
We've left the land behind us,
the stump-pocked crests, the creased hills
of Vandenburg Missile Base
where nothing moved, nothing breathed
except one lone steam engine
pulling nothing, and the waves
which came at the shore as though
they mattered, row after row.

The major reads; his lips move
soundlessly, wordlessly,

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like a lunatic's in love;
he reads that they're making us
get out of our cars to be
counted, they're getting tough
and we're getting tougher back,
he passes over the small
blurred photo of Jean Cocteau,
the names of the Champions,
Cerdan, LaMotta, Piaf,
for whom there are no poems.
If I shut my eyes I know
I'll be in a private home
for the blind where things are worse.

My good neighbor, the major,
looks at me. His eyes are young,
placid, and light blue as though
unused, and he offers me
half his newspaper, offers
his window seat—for he's seen
it all—offers a comment
on the weather but not on
the night which seems to be
gathering at the margins
of sight or at the bottom
of the ocean or in
the twin periods marking
the dead centers of our eyes.

Heaven

If you were twenty-seven
and had done time for beating
your ex-wife and had
no dreams you remembered
in the morning, you might
lie on your bed and listen

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to a mad canary sing
and think it all right to be
there every Saturday
ignoring your neighbors, the streets,
the signs that said join,
and the need to be helping.
You might build, as he did,
a network of golden ladders
so that the bird could roam
on all levels of the room;
you might paint the ceiling blue,
the floor green, and shade
the place you called the sun
so that things came softly to order
when the light came on.
He and the bird lived
in the fine weather of heaven;
they never aged, they
never tired or wanted
all through that war,
but when it was over
and the nation had been saved,
he knew they'd be hunted.
He knew, as you would too,
that he'd be laid off
for not being braver,
and it would do no good
to show how he had taken
clothespins and cardboard
and made each step safe.
It would do no good
to have been one of the few
that climbed higher and higher
even in time of war,
for now there would be the poor
asking for their share,
and hurt men in uniforms,
and no one to believe
that heaven was really here.

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Transformations

She would remember the sight
    from the bluffs above
the river, remember how

the golden chips of mica
    marked the current
by tugging back in wide arcs,

and how when the local kids
    ran along the shore
or flopped among the blond reeds

their legs flashed with the sun's power.
    Then he led her down
another trail where weeds flowered

in clusters, where she still heard
    the boys' voices far off
calling, and then her own voice

somehow far off and calling.
    When she washed her face
in the river she caught chips

of soft brown mica on her
    palms and fingertips
and cut them through with her nails.

Could she believe what she'd seen?
    The transformations
on those boys, of light on them,

on their skins and in the air?
    She would recall it
with the first simple release

of her own face as it broke
    deranged forever
on the face of those waters.

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HAROLD WITT

November 22, 1963

As I browsed in Simon's Hardware
among evasive evidence
of man's inventive mind—
powermowers, stoves of beauty,
slim lamps to light our dark—
the stone age news from Dallas
was suddenly flashed on ten TV's
to customers in shock.

A déjà vu went up my neck
as I saw the faces state
The President is shot,
and turned to the watching people
who turned with an equal look
of What Hath God Wrought?
It was as if we stood at Hiroshima
when the air began to shriek.

There at the center
of the perfectly working machine
the sand of insanity rubbed—
shoppers stopped for the tableau,
an antique Forum scene,
or theatre where slumped
Lincoln, the cooling victim,
while madness jumped down with a gun.

Buying the toy telephone for the baby,
and the bathtime plastic boat,
I said to the clerk, "Maybe
he won't die—"
but, "They say he's dead," she told,
and "Oh God, why, why?

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Why are people so crazy?
I hope the killer gets shot."

I felt a mired answer
that would make the mind run cold,
but only shrugged, "Who knows?"
unsexed as the doomed assassin
who had loosed the phallic load
or Kennedy ebbing remote,
and fled from the counter where lifelike dolls
and toys of war were sold.

Surprised by Others at Fort Cronkhite

Desperate for wilderness, we walk through fog
along a winter beach, surprised by others
straining stone sands for jade, walking along
in beards, in childhood; families, friends, young lovers.
As if this weren't incongruous enough,
two orientals, as in a dimming film,
through drifting mists, canoe the grey lagoon.

Each group is by itself, as though they too
believed the coolness might keep others home
from the abandoned fort—a day without a view—
the green sea breaks in grey, the waves look sliced,
palely transparent, from a darker hue.
The faded barracks have been boarded up,
a wartime memory on the cloudy hill.

Our children like it, stooping after stones
since everyone seems searching, coming up
with bits of brilliance in a paper cup.
The gulls keep diving as the foghorn moans.
We're slowly strolling toward some tidepool rocks,

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past bundled others walking back from walks
to where the sea piles wild with bouldered foams.

And every group that came to be alone
stares without smiling, looks another way
or crouches downward, jealous at its jade.
What did we hope to find, in such dark weather—
the teeming sea, which spawned the world of Cain,
gated to guard an Eden of our own—
that meeting our images, we're so dismayed?

The Hawk

tilted while we sat still,
theoretic thing,
and streaked, bent tense to kill
on pointed wing—

what was a feathered cross
cruising admired in skies
became what we knew of hawks—
a clawed surprise

to tear whatever it was—
lamb tottering lost
or rabbit hopping in grass—
some gentleness,

as if nature had meant
to demonstrate by this
bird with a low intent,
its deadly purpose—

how meekness hasn't a chance
under the eye of power,
the high, wide cateyed glance
and hookbeak glower

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of a hawk or anything else
so well equipped
with plumages of stealth,
sharply tipped.

So we thought as we watched
the hawk swoop down—
nothing is safe that's soft
or slow on the ground,

yet we had food for thought
when the hawk flapped up again—
tenderness hadn't been caught.
It blended in.

DANIEL HOFFMAN

In the Pitch of Night

White-throat beyond my window,
The sliver of your song
Pierces the mist before the morning light
Shrivels the promises of night.

Your song
Changes nothing. The cold bay
Heaves and settles as before.
I cannot see you
In your cloudy tree.

Why do you thrust your silver knife
Into my silences? What undelivered
Letter will you open
Slitting the folded edges
Of my sleep?

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It is darker
Before my open eyelids
Than in the clarity before
When I was hearing
From a burning tree

l'Oiseau sing.
I could all but see him in the blaze.
His unappeasable desire
Threaded across the sky
A testament of change

Melting into song
Those pure resonances only
That echo without cease
Through discords dying all the day.

At Evening

At evening comes a certain hour
When the teeming world remembers
It is a hostage of the dead.

Then bend in homage
The tall trees whose sprinkle of seeds
Tickled the wind. The wind is dying.

This is the hour when dust
Gleams as the tired corona leans
Its bloodied head against the rim of sky

And the dark night girds
Beyond the pulsing stars
To drop its pomps of mourning down.

From windows of the houses come
Colloquial sounds and pungent odors,
Alien rhythms thrust against the night.

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The Way He Went

He didn't go away
To the roll of drums
Or to annunciatory thunder
Of mantic voices,

He didn't leave by the long light
Of line-storms slashing doomed horizons
Or the guiding blink and dousing
Of little harbor lights,

He went by darkness and by daylight going
A silent way
Vacating endless
Acreages of parking-lots and marshes

Still
Then evening all atwitch with raucous birds
Ignorant of the emptiness that fell
Lighter than dew.

He went
And the stars shone hard and rocks
Arose in their accustomed risings
From the sea while broken clouds

Scudded against and closed around
Ragged towers of the city
Gathering tumults of electric signboards
Glowing in the sky where many colors

Made one color
As before.

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MARY LOUISE WILLEY

The Imprisonment

I

One autumn morning Samuel Berg's man came as usual at nine-thirty to wake his master. He told Berg that two policemen were waiting for him downstairs. They expected him to come with them immediately to the Prison of the Ministry of Arts and Letters. There was no time for him to shave or eat breakfast.

To Berg, a sensitive man, it seemed that the Ministry must be familiar with his habits, and with his insistence on routine. After a night of work that lasted until two in the morning or later, he slept until nine-thirty. Then he rose, shaved, and dressed; he ate breakfast at ten. If he had to start the day unshaven, he felt uncomfortable, disordered; a good breakfast he considered essential for his well-being and his ability to work.

Samuel Berg was a successful novelist. He had a good reputation among his colleagues as well as among the critics. He had many readers—the intelligent and discriminating as well as the curious and thrill-seeking.

He never wrote during the day. Once he had finished breakfast he took a walk around his garden, then spent the rest of the morning on his correspondence. If he had any business with his agent or publisher he attended to it over a good lunch in one of the expensive restaurants downtown. Otherwise he ate at home alone. After lunch he took another walk in the garden, then read or worked on the articles he was sometimes asked to do. At three he left the house and walked to his gymnasium. There he spent two hours. First he took exercise, on cycling and rowing machines, then he went into the steam bath. He ended with a cold shower and a rubdown by his masseur. At five he left the gymnasium, bought a paper from a newsstand, and walked to his club. Until six-thirty, when dinner was served, he sat sipping sherry and reading the paper from cover to cover. Now and then he exchanged a few superficial remarks on the weather, political events, or his work with another club member. He dined alone, and always ordered a glass of fine wine with his meal. After coffee

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and brandy he walked home. By eight he was upstairs at work in his study.

His novels were tales of fantasy, of criminal and sexual perversion. He wrote of bizarre, exquisitely planned rape or murder, of lovers who experienced pleasure by inflicting or receiving curious tortures, of demons who consorted with men or women, of scientists who conducted strange experiments on the organs of animals or men. He inevitably had a large audience of readers seeking to gratify their own morbid impulses, but the more thoughtful understood that Berg had a sure insight into lawless, seldom-confessed desires. Psychologists often wrote asking him how he had acquired this knowledge. Their letters usually ended with more or less veiled requests for him to supply the secret details of his life.

Others, without the excuse of science, also sought these details. His man, his agent, his publisher, the attendants at the gymnasium or the club were often questioned about Berg's habits. The seekers always went away disappointed. There was nothing in Berg's life that even faintly suggested anything in his books. He had no family, no friends, and no one could discover or even invent a relationship between Berg and another person. To his readers' disappointment he led the eventless life of a completely proper bachelor.

II

Dressing for his departure, Berg felt vaguely apprehensive. He knew very little about the Prison, but he had heard many stories. Most of them he did not believe, except for a few which were repeated over and over. He did know that no one ever died or was killed in the Prison, and that prisoners were released after short terms of two or three months. No one ever spoke of his time in the Prison. Some said that the authorities swore the prisoners to silence, but Berg knew that this was no way to keep people from talking. He suspected that no one wanted to talk about what had happened to him in the Prison.

Another thing he knew was that no inferior artist ever went to Prison. Hack musicians and writers, commercial painters and sculptors were left in peace to grind out their cheap tunes, their sentimental or sensational stories, their photographic paintings and lifelike statues. Only the serious artist was sent to Prison.

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In his student days Berg had known slightly a painter who had been imprisoned. Like others he never spoke of his term. All Berg knew was that there was a great change in the painter's life after he was released. He had led a bohemian, bachelor existence before his confinement; afterwards he suddenly married a girl whom his parents had urged him to take as a wife. He became a contented husband, a doting father, and he never again painted a stroke. This worried Berg. Would he stop writing? He had heard, of course, of young writers, struggling to express themselves, who had written much better after their imprisonment. But these were among the stories which he did not believe.

While he dressed, Berg had his man pack a bag with a few clean clothes, his shaving equipment, and other toilet articles. But when they went downstairs one of the policemen shook his head. "No personal effects allowed in the Prison," he said. Berg set down the bag and followed the two men to the door.

The same policeman spoke again: "They will arrange with your bank about his wages." He waved his arm towards Berg's man, who nodded to show that he agreed. "Take care of everything for me," said Berg.

"Yes, sir," answered the man, and closed the door softly after them.

III

At the Prison, Berg was led first to the Warden's office. The Warden was seated behind a large desk, the blotter surrounded on both sides by stacks of paper. He was a tall, stout man, with an old-fashioned mustache whose ends drooped down beside the corners of his mouth. When Berg entered he put on a pair of horn-rimmed glasses and began to read a paper in front of him. Berg, standing before the desk, could see that this was his own certificate of admission to the Prison.

For what seemed several minutes the Warden ran his eyes over the page. Berg suspected that he was not reading at all. At last the Warden raised his head, turned the paper around and handed it to Berg. "Sign here." He pointed to a broken line near the bottom of the sheet. He plucked a pen from the holder beside him and put it into Berg's hand.

Berg glanced over the page as he wrote. It was a Government form, printed on green paper, filled out with a typewriter. He

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did not dare take the time to read it thoroughly, but he could see that it had all the usual information: the names of his parents, his birthplace and birth date, his education, occupation, past and present residences, as well as his income, the titles of all his books and articles, the names of his publisher and agent. There was also a list of all people who came into contact with him during the day, and all seemed to be there, from his man to the humblest waiter at the club. His daily routine, with the exact time of each activity, was printed below the list. At the bottom of the sheet, beneath the line for his signature, a sentence read: "Please turn the page for comments." Berg could see, from the embossed look of the sheet, that the reverse was covered with typewritten paragraphs. He was about to turn the paper over when the Warden took it from him.

The Warden turned to someone in a corner of the room. "Search him," he said.

A handsome, blond young man came forward. He wore the scarlet and gold uniform of the Ministry Police. He thrust his hands into all the pockets of Berg's suit. Berg held his arms out stiffly from his sides, his body tense. As the man touched him he drew in his breath in an attempt to shrink from the contact.

The policeman took out Berg's gold pocket-watch, one or two business letters, and a few coins. He removed Berg's billfold, which did not contain much money. He put everything on the desk. "This will be returned to you on your release," said the Warden. "You may go now." He turned to the young man: "Number 106." Berg followed the policeman out the door.

The walk to his cell lasted nearly ten minutes. They went out of the office down a long corridor which curved slightly to the left. (Berg remembered that the Prison building formed a complete circle.) The high ceiling was studded with faintly burning electric lights. On either side of the corridor black wooden doors were set into the spotless white walls. A small window in the shape of a triangle was cut into each door. Below it the number of the cell was painted in white. When they reached 100 the policeman turned right and opened a door leading to a stairway. They climbed up one flight and came out onto another corridor, identical with the one below. They continued in the same direction as before and soon stopped in front of 106, a door on the left.

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The policeman took out a single gold key and unlocked the door. Berg was dazzled by the sight of his cell. The walls were of smooth, clean white plaster, from which the morning sun rebounded almost blindingly. The floor was of highly polished black linoleum. The room, slightly wedge-shaped, was long and narrow, with a high ceiling. The sunlight came in through a small barred window cut into the wall at the narrower end of the room. The only furniture was a neatly made cot with white sheets and blankets. Berg saw that he could just reach the window by standing on the bed, but that he could not see out unless he hoisted himself up by the bars.

The right-hand corner, at the window end, was screened off with a scarlet and gold curtain. The policeman pulled it back and showed Berg a flush toilet and a small basin with a mirror above it. A washcloth and towel hung from a bar on one side of the basin; toothbrush, toothpaste and soap were ranged on a shelf below the mirror. Both toilet and basin had been scrubbed to spotlessness, and the chrome plumbing fixtures shone brilliantly. The policeman took a bundle from the bed and handed it to Berg. It was a white garment. "You may change in there," he said, pointing to the curtained bathroom. "Take off all your own clothes and give them to me. They will be returned to you when you leave." He sat down on the bed.

Berg went into the bathroom with the bundle. He pulled the curtain tightly behind him. He undressed quickly, for it made him nervous to have the policeman there. He could hear the cot creak as the man shifted his weight.

The garment, in two pieces, was rather like that of a hospital attendant. The jacket hung down nearly to Berg's crotch and tied at the waist with a pair of tapes on either side. The sleeves were so long that he had to roll them up. The trouser legs were too short and almost reached his knees.

"This suit doesn't fit," he said, emerging from the bathroom. The policeman looked at him. "You'll get a change every day. Bring me your own clothes."

Berg went back and picked up his clothes. He handed them to the policeman, who took them and left, closing the door gently behind him. Berg did not hear him lock it, so when he was sure that the man was out of earshot he cautiously tried the handle. It did not move; the door was obviously equipped with an automatic

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lock. Berg sat down on the bed and stared up at the window. He thought that he should roll the bed over beneath the window, so that he could look out, but he did not want to do it now. There would be plenty of time for that.

The first few days of his imprisonment passed without any event other than the routine of the day. Breakfast was brought some time before sunrise, lunch when the sun had just begun to slide away from the window, supper shortly after dusk. The food was simple—beans, thick soups, meat and vegetable stews, dark bread, milk, and strong, unsweetened coffee. Berg found that he was quite hungry for each meal and did not mind the coarseness and tastelessness of the food.

The meals were brought by a boy of about twelve, dressed in the Police uniform. He was a handsome child, with blond hair that kept tumbling in his eyes, and sunburnt cheeks. Berg wondered how he could get outdoors, working in the Prison as he did.

Along with breakfast the boy brought a change of clothing. Each day the suit was a different size, and only occasionally did Berg have one which fit him perfectly. At first he complained to the boy, who simply nodded at him, but at last he gave up.

When the boy came to take away the breakfast dishes a large, stout woman came with him. She wore a white uniform, white stockings and shoes. From one of her pockets she drew a shaving brush and razor, which she handed to Berg. He had to shave while she stood next to him. He had expected something like this; the Prison authorities did not want anyone to cut his throat. Certainly no one would attempt anything with this woman standing by. She stood a good head taller than Berg, and had bulging arm muscles like a wrestler. She stood so close that he could feel her breath on his face. After she left he took a sponge bath and changed into the clean clothes.

Towards the end of the first week the boy came in one afternoon with mops and brushes. He swept, scrubbed and waxed the floor, disinfected the toilet, polished the bathroom fixtures, and washed any spots or fingerprints off the walls. While he was there Berg sat on the bed, raising his legs when the boy wanted to clean underneath it. He felt relieved when the child finally left.

Shortly afterward the woman came in with clean towels and a change of bed linen. With one or two sweeping motions she stripped the soiled sheets from the bed and slapped the clean

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ones down on the bare mattress. She left; Berg was expected to make the bed himself.

During these days he felt a sense of elation. It was as if he were finally having the vacation he had never taken before. It was a relief to be done with his routine, and even more of a relief to be done with the toil and anxiety that always went with his writing. He had expected to miss his work, but he did not. He was glad to be rid of its demanding and often painful bondage.

For the first day or two he did nothing but sit on the bed, which he always smoothed out after breakfast, or stroll about his cell. He ate his meals slowly, trying to make them last as long as possible. He took a long afternoon nap and went to bed shortly after supper. There was no electric light in the cell. Only a faint gleam from the hall came through the triangle in the door.

He enjoyed being alone. Even though he was doing nothing—not even much thinking—the intrusions of the boy and the woman annoyed him. He always tried to hasten their departure, for he was anxious to return to the relaxed state of doing nothing, with no one there.

Then he began to grow bored, and decided to do the conventional things he had heard that people did in prison. He spent his days running over all the poetry he had ever learned. When he could not remember a line he spent hours using every trick of memory to recall it. After two or three days he ran out of poetry and started on music. During the past thirty years he had had little time for diversion, but in his student days he had often gone to concerts. He found that he remembered a great deal of music. When he could not recall a passage he invented one, and these often pleased him more than the real music.

During this time he kept careful track of the date of each day. Every morning he said to himself: "Today is October the twenty-fifth. Today is October the twenty-fifth." He would repeat this from time to time during the day. But soon he found himself forgetting. He would begin the day saying: "Today is October the twenty-seventh," but by mid-morning his mind grew muddled. He could not remember if it was the twenty-fourth, the twenty-seventh, or the twenty-sixth. All he was sure of was the date of his imprisonment, October the twenty-first.

Finally he ran out of music, too. At first he found it enjoyable to repeat compositions, but soon this failed to satisfy him. He

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grew restless. He spent his first bad night, his sleep broken frequently by dreams. The plot of an entire novel came to him near dawn, and he grew so excited that he could not sleep. He lay awake until the boy came in with breakfast, and immediately asked him for pencil and paper. The boy nodded and left, but when he came to clear the dishes he brought nothing but the change of clothing. The woman brought nothing. Berg spent the morning pacing nervously up and down the cell, waiting for someone to come. Soon he suspected that this request would have the same fate as his demand for properly fitting clothes.

After lunch, resigned, he began to look around the cell for substitutes. He had read of ambitious prisoners who used all sorts of materials for writing. He thought first of tearing up the bed sheets for paper, but the woman would surely look for them when she came to take the soiled linen. There was toilet paper, but that seemed too flimsy. And what would he use for ink? Coffee? That made a faint stain, but perhaps it would be dark enough. And what would he use for a pen? The toothbrush was too large and blunt. Perhaps he could save a spoon, along with a cup of coffee, and write on toilet paper.

Then he decided that it wouldn't work. He was sure that he had seen the boy examine the tray after every meal. No doubt he checked each piece of crockery and cutlery; he would know at once if anything were missing. Coffee and spoon were out of the question.

He looked at the woven springs of his cot, remembering that sometimes one of the wires worked loose, but all were in tightly. He might pry one out with a spoon or knife during supper time, but there was still the problem of ink. He did not fancy using his own blood, as had one desperate convict he had read of.

He gave up and sat down on the bed. He felt curiously relieved. Even though he had hit on the plot for a novel, even though he was sure that it would be a good novel, he did not really want to write it. In the week or two of his imprisonment his mind had gone slack; he had lost the will to draw it together for its accustomed work.

It seemed to Berg that now he understood the secret of the Prison. The placid routine, leaving no opportunity for any activity but thought, was designed to dull the creative powers. One might become so accustomed to doing nothing that, on his re-

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lease, he would no longer write or paint or compose. That would account for his artist acquaintance. There was also the danger that the absence of occupation could drive one mad.

He was elated—now he knew what to fight against, and he would do so. He would not go mad, he would not lose his creative powers. He would find occupation for his mind. He would keep running over his novel, mentally writing it and any others that might occur to him. He would have only to put them on paper after he was released.

He had thought vaguely of the possibility of tortures. Now it seemed that probably there were none. The barren round of Prison life was torture enough.

Now that he had acquired a purpose, he grew suddenly active. At last he would stop procrastinating and look out the window. He rolled the cot beneath it. He jumped on the bed, reached up and grasped two of the bars. He was not too long away from his old life to have lost the strength he had developed in the gymnasium. He hoisted himself up until he could look out the tiny window.

He saw a large, grassy courtyard, bounded by the circular red brick building of the Prison. In the center of the courtyard was a stone fountain in the shape of a naked woman astride a leaping fish. The fish, mouth agape, gushed water into a stone bowl below. Two more streams of water spouted from the woman's breasts. Berg looked away from the fountain, around the courtyard.

Several prisoners of both sexes were wandering around. They were dressed like Berg, except that the women wore white skirts instead of trousers. He noticed almost at once that there was no communication between any of the prisoners. They did not even look at each other. They walked aimlessly about by themselves. Some sat alone on benches, others sat or lay on the ground. Some walked about the fountain or dangled their fingers in the water. Occasionally someone raised his head to look at a bird or an airplane flying over.

Berg's arms gave out and he had to let himself down onto the bed. The courtyard had made him curious. What were the prisoners doing there? Why was he not let out like them? When he had rested a few minutes he raised himself up again.

The scene had not changed. He watched for a few moments, trying not to look at the fountain. Then he saw a man, standing

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almost directly beneath his window, make water right where he stood. A woman walked by, within a yard of him, and did not seem to notice. The man did not look at her, hurry, or hide his action. Over beyond the fountain Berg saw a woman, her skirt pulled up over her buttocks, squatting like a dog. He dropped back onto the bed.

Some time later he pulled himself up again. This time he avoided watching both the fountain and the prisoners and looked at the Prison building instead. Five rows of small barred windows circled the unadorned red brick, their monotonous march broken only on the ground floor by green doors set at regular intervals. The only irregularity was a clock, set between the last row of windows and the flat roof of the building. The clock was at Berg's right; he leaned around and tried to read the hour, but the clock was placed in the curve of the brick so that he could just see that it was a clock but could not read its face. He thought bitterly of the prisoners whose cells faced that clock. They had an accurate idea of the day's progression which he, Berg, could not get from merely observing the shifting of the sun.

Suddenly the jets of the fountain flared up, then stopped. The prisoners began to walk slowly towards the doors. At each one a guard appeared holding it open. The prisoners walked in single files. Berg noticed that men often went in ahead of women, instead of waiting for them to go first. Soon the courtyard was empty, and the growing darkness reminded Berg that supper time was near. He fell back onto the bed and lay there, resting his aching arms, until the boy came.

All that evening he thought of the courtyard. At first he was at a loss to explain the presence of the people there, or their behavior. Then it occurred to him that perhaps these were prisoners who had gone mad. Certainly they seemed to have lost all sense of propriety and all feeling for others. He imagined that mental hospitals were like this. There were only a few raving, violent patients, locked in isolated wards; most wandered about silently, enclosed in their own thoughts, oblivious of their fellows, just as the prisoners in the courtyard.

People did go insane, then, from the inactive Prison life. Perhaps he would go mad, too. He remembered his earlier resolution, and his determination returned. The courtyard could be an instrument of his preservation. It could give him something to do.

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Morning and afternoon—even at night—he would swing himself up and look out the window. Even when no one was out, there would be something to watch. (He tried not to think about the fountain, or the man and woman relieving themselves.) His arms would grow stronger, and he could stay up for longer and longer periods. By looking at something outside of his cell he need not constantly think and worry about himself. He need not fall back completely on his own resources. Thus he could save himself from the introspection that leads to madness.

But was this all he had to do? Other prisoners could do the same; it should not be difficult to avoid insanity. What, then, had happened to those people in the yard? And why did no one want to talk about his experiences in Prison? Perhaps there were tortures after all. It was rather simple-minded to believe that the dullness of Prison routine was the only form of torment.

But if there were tortures, why did he hear no screaming? Surely there must be other prisoners on his corridor, but he had never heard them. Somewhat reassured, he pulled the covers up to his chin and tried to sleep, but he felt nervous and jumpy. He slept only when the window began to go grey with dawn. The light soothed him.

He had little appetite for breakfast and only drank his coffee. After shaving he washed, changed his clothes, and lay back on the bed, still worrying, as he had during the night. Then he had an idea. He went to one of the inside walls and with his fist slowly pounded four blows. He waited. Nothing happened. He pounded again. Still nothing. He could think of no code, but certainly anyone on the other side would gather from the deliberateness of the pounding that he was not mad, but that he simply wanted to communicate. He pounded again, but again received no answer.

Probably there was no one in the cell on that side. He went to the opposite wall and knocked in the same way. Still no answer. He struck the wall again, but now without conviction. No one was going to answer. Were there no prisoners on either side of him, or could they not hear his pounding? He remembered that the wall with the window was cut very thick. There was a space of about a foot between the bars and the pane of glass that kept out the weather. Undoubtedly the walls separating him from his neighbors were just as thick, or thicker. They would absorb even

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the most violent hammering. Would sound penetrate the windows? Probably not. Both the outside window and the one in the door were undoubtedly made of special glass which would also absorb noise. All the prisoners, then, were immured with their own sounds. They could not communicate. If they were tortured, their cries would never pierce through to their fellow prisoners.

For the rest of that day, and during several succeeding ones, Berg could do nothing. He spent the entire day lying on his bed. He expected the tortures to begin at any moment. Whenever he heard a hand on the door he started and sat bolt upright, watching the door. He had a moment's relief when the boy or the woman appeared; when they had gone his terror began afresh.

He changed his clothes, washed, made his bed, because he felt it was expected of him, and he shaved because the woman was always there for it. He ate little; fear made swallowing difficult. He drank coffee or a little gravy, but his mouth was always too dry to chew much bread or meat. He usually managed to force down a little, because he was terrified by the sight of his face in the mirror.

He was a rather handsome man in his early fifties. He had taken excellent care of himself. He thought that his lack of human relationships had also helped to keep his body muscled and well-fleshed, his face firm and smooth. Now he had grown thin: his ribs seemed to spring up along his chest, his cheekbones thrust out above his hollowed cheeks. Long creases appeared at the corners of his mouth. His brow seemed perpetually raised in a frown. Eating might restore his flesh, but Berg feared that he could never again relax his face to make the wrinkles disappear.

Once he had breakfasted, shaved, and washed he lay back on the bed. He spent the entire day staring up at the small ventilating grate set in the center of the ceiling. His resolution was shattered; he could not even hoist himself up to look out into the courtyard. The people there seemed horrible reminders of what was in store for him. He could only wait for his own torments to begin.

After a week or so he began to relax. He had lived with his fear for so long that it began to lose its power. He ate more, and sometimes he got off the bed and walked around the cell. He even pulled himself up to the window once, but he was careful to do it at a time when he was sure that the courtyard would be empty.

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It was early on what he guessed must be a morning in late November. The sun had just reached the yard. The grass had grown brown and it glistened with frost. The fountain was not playing; the water in the pool shone with a thin film of ice. Suddenly the fish, the woman's breasts began to spout. The gush from the fish caved in the ice where it fell, and water spread over the ice around the bowl.

At the same time the doors were flung open, guards appeared, and the prisoners walked out. They were dressed for the cold with red shawls wrapped about their arms and shoulders and heavy leather boots on their feet. They clasped their arms about their bodies, as if they were not warm enough. Their breath came in clouds of steam.

Berg's arms had grown weak and he had to lower himself to the bed. He lay back to rest and think. Somehow the sight of that bright, chilly morning had cheered him. He remembered such mornings when he walked around his garden. The frosted grass crackled beneath his shoes; the straw covering the flower beds was sheathed in ice. He blew plumes of steam as he breathed, his nose was chilled, and he had to keep his hands in his pockets. The cold gave him a feeling of power and ability; sometimes he wanted to change his schedule and begin writing immediately, without waiting for night.

Now, in Prison, the same feeling came over him. He had been here—what, a month? Perhaps more. A Prison term lasted only two or three months—perhaps his was half over! Then what about the tortures? Hadn't he been tortured enough this past week, simply in the expectation of torture? Perhaps that was all there was to it; the prisoner had the idea that he was going to be tortured and he went mad waiting. But if one understood this, he could avoid the strain of waiting, for he knew that there was nothing to wait for.

All Berg's resolution came back in a rush. He began to go over his poetry and music again, and in the afternoon he mentally wrote the first chapter of his novel. Then he hauled himself up to the window to watch the prisoners file in at the end of the day.

That night he fell asleep almost immediately, without the dreams that had troubled him lately. He wakened when his cell grew light. At first he thought it must be morning, but the light seemed to come from somewhere inside his cell. The window was

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dark. The walls, the floor, the ceiling were bathed in a pale yellow glow. He sat up in bed and saw his shadow rise next to him on the wall.

Then, on the wall opposite his bed, he saw a large diamond-shape of violet light. Its edges trembled. It was joined by a circle of red light, then a square of green. Berg watched in fascination. The colors pleased him, and the slight vibration of the shapes reminded him of films. He looked around for the source of the light; it must come from a projector somewhere just outside his cell. He looked at the window, the small window in the door, the ventilating grill in the ceiling. None of these emitted the telltale beam of light. He got up, looked under the bed, behind the bathroom curtain, but they did not appear to hide the projector. He sat down on the bed and watched his wall.

It was now filled with colored shapes, all of them geometrical. They began to move about, to slide in and out above and below one another. Sometimes one form would glide over another; their colors blended for an instant.

As he watched, the shapes slowly changed. He noticed it first with the large violet diamond. The two vertical angles began to draw away from each other, stretching towards the floor and ceiling. The diamond grew thin, elongated. Its angles went blunt. It reached from floor to ceiling—a long, slowly waggling finger.

The others changed, too. The red circle began to quiver; a swelling suddenly erupted along its edge, then another and another. It was no longer a circle. Lumps, fingerlike shapes burst from it, then withdrew into the mass. Within it appeared a hole, its shape altering constantly with the movements around it. Then its lips closed together. For a moment the circle returned to its original contour, then another swelling burst from its side, and another hole split in its center. Berg looked away from it, but all the other shapes were behaving in the same way.

Some spread out. Their angles softened to curves. They grew into long, writhing forms, like underwater plants, fish, snakes, or arms, legs, fingers, other parts of the body. Others pulled themselves together into fat, trembling lumps. A square gradually went flat, lost its corners and took on a sausage shape. Slowly the sausage bent itself into a circle, until its two ends met, forming a hole like an open mouth. The circle began to quiver; the lips

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parted wider, then approached each other. They closed, then parted again. Berg shut his eyes.

When his eyes were closed his mind took over. Visions of the same writhing, throbbing forms flickered against his dark eyelids. He crushed his fists against his eyes until they ached. The visions persisted. The forms changed, interlaced like giant fingers, slipped between one another, blended, separated. He opened his eyes, and the same sights were repeated on the wall. He shut his eyes and the lights continued.

Soon he did not know whether his eyes were closed or open. He buried his head under the pillow, beneath the covers. He nearly blinded himself with his fists, but the lights pursued him. He was trembling violently. His shirt was drenched with sweat. He suddenly had a tremendous urge to urinate. He sat on the edge of the bed for a moment, fearing to move. He feared that if he stepped from the bed the shapes would attack him, but at last he could bear it no longer. He stepped onto the floor and ran to the bathroom, pulling the curtain violently behind him.

The lights were in there, too. They covered the walls, floor, and ceiling. A tongue of green light leaped back and forth upon the floor, at each leap barely touching Berg's heels as he stood in front of the toilet. He had to force his water. When he was done he dashed back to bed.

He lay there, sweating and trembling more and more. He gazed at the ceiling, where the lights continued their quivering dance. He did not bother to close his eyes any more.

After a while the lights seemed to fade. They did not disappear, but their colors bleached slightly. Berg looked at the window and saw with relief that it was growing light outside. Suddenly the shapes vanished; someone had turned off the projector.

He lay on his back in the same position, without moving, for nearly half an hour. He always lay still like this after a particularly bad nightmare, and the lights had been far worse than any nightmare. He was waiting, too, to see if the projector would go on again, but it did not. Soon it was light enough so that the colors would have been scarcely visible. It was time for the boy to bring breakfast.

Berg could not even hold his coffee cup, so violently was he trembling. He felt so ill that when he finally swallowed some of

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the hot liquid he was forced to run from bed to the toilet. He vomited, and crept back to bed almost too weak to stand.

When the woman came he lay on his side and stared at her. "Well, get up," she said.

"I'm not shaving today. I couldn't possibly do it."

She grasped one of his arms, hauled him up from the bed, and dragged him over to the basin. In spite of his trembling he managed to lather his face, then he picked up the razor and looked in the mirror.

His face had never looked so terrible. His cheeks had caved in, his eyes seemed to have dropped far back in their sockets. Purple shadows lay beneath them like bruises. His skin was pale grey, his lips blue. He was reminded of his grandfather, whom he had once seen in the hospital just before his death.

He could hardly control the razor. Now and then the woman reached up to steady his hand. To his surprise he cut himself only once, a tiny scratch along his chin. When he had finished he dropped the razor into the basin and fell against the woman. She shoved him into a standing position and pushed him back to bed. She handed him the clean clothes which the boy had left and retired behind the curtain.

Berg did not even consider bathing this morning. He changed as quickly as he could, not bothering to tie the tapes at the sides of the jacket. His hands shook too much. He lay back on the bed. The woman came out from behind the curtain, leaned over him and tied one pair of the tapes. She rolled him over on his side and tied the other pair. Picking up the soiled clothes, she went out.

Berg lay on his back all day, rigid and unmoving. He got up only to use the bathroom. He did not try to eat or drink. When dark came he lay there, in the same position, waiting for the lights to begin again. He did not sleep, although the lights were not turned on that night.

They were not turned on for the next few nights, but he kept waiting for them. He was weak with fatigue, but as soon as it grew dark he was much too tense to sleep. He was afraid to sleep, as after a nightmare, for fear it would return. He feared that if he relaxed into unconsciousness the lights would go on again. Awake, he felt he could somehow prevent their reappearance.

He slept for short periods during the day, but always woke

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within a half-hour, covered with sweat, his heart pounding. Sometimes he forced down a little liquid at meals. When shaving, he tried to look at himself in the mirror as little as possible. He had grown even thinner, and his face had taken on a yellow cast. Worst of all, his hair, which had been black, was now turning grey. He remembered the times he had spent in front of the mirror at home, plucking out occasional grey hairs. Now so many had turned that it was hopeless to try to get rid of them.

For several days he remained in the state of tense expectancy that kept him from food and sleep. He knew that they were not finished with him. He supposed they would let him recover somewhat, then they would begin again.

One night he was so exhausted that he fell asleep shortly after supper. He awoke almost immediately, looking for the lights. They did not come on, and he fell asleep again. He spent the entire night alternately sleeping and jerking awake, but he felt somewhat better in the morning. He ate a little, and sat up on the bed once or twice. The next night he slept through until dawn.

He had begun to relax. His system, of its own accord, was taking a rest after its long period of tension. Berg suspected that the tortures were likely to begin again. He awaited them with a sort of numbness instead of his former nervousness.

He spent a calm day, eating more and napping between meals. He fell asleep again after supper. He was awakened some time later by a soft confusion of sounds. He sat up in bed. The sounds grew louder, and he recognized an orchestra, tuning up. This was something he had loved in his youth—the mixture of instruments, playing in different keys and rhythms. He leaned back against the wall and listened. The strings droned out their chords, pitches shifting slightly as the players turned the pegs to tune them. The woodwinds fluttered above them, playing fanciful trills and cadenzas. Now and then one of the brasses let out a blast of sound. In the background the drums pounded slowly.

Then it was silent. Berg remembered this moment. The conductor stood with raised arms while the players sat, lips on mouthpieces, bows on strings, ready to play when the signal came. Berg waited for that unseen sign.

The music began, but it was not the usual tremendous chord, sounded by the full orchestra. Instead it was a duet, played by

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two woodwinds which Berg recognized as the oboe and English horn. They played music he had never heard before.

One instrument would play a phrase, the other would echo and distort it. The oboe played a fragment of a slow, sad melody; the horn repeated it, in a faster tempo, with a braying laugh. The oboe cackled like a hen and the horn answered with an almost human chuckle. Then they played a melody in unison; the music seemed familiar, and Berg felt he could almost identify it when the instruments shifted key, changed rhythm, and began something new. The oboe kept time with a soft clucking, while the horn laughed in a descending "ha ha ha."

The duet was brought to a stop by a tremendous blow on the cymbals, so loud that Berg nearly jumped from the bed. The second blow was gentler, then there was silence. Another duet began.

This time it was the violin and 'cello. The 'cello, on its lowest string, played a loud, husky command. The violin answered in a high, faint voice, hesitant and wavering. The 'cello insisted again, and the violin rose in a thin, quavering scale that faded away into silence. The 'cello then ascended from its lowest tone to its highest, scale after scale. It paused for several beats on the first and fifth tones of each scale. As it reached its upper notes, the violin joined it with a high, sweet trill that continued after the 'cello was silent.

Suddenly the trill was shattered by an explosion from the tuba, then another and another. It was a loud, toneless blat, with a splattering sound, as if the player were spitting with each blast. The explosions went on and on, marching in slow, four-beat rhythm. Berg stopped his ears, but he could not shut out the sound of the horn.

At last it ended. Berg now heard a soft pounding, which he recognized as the beating of his heart. He always heard it when he blocked his ears, and the sound disturbed him almost as much as the one he sought to escape. But even when he uncovered his ears the beating was continued, by the gentle pounding of a drum.

It went on for several minutes, gradually growing louder and faster. Berg shifted uncomfortably on the bed. He stopped his ears again, but he still heard the beating. He took his hands away.

The drum was beating loudly, rapidly, and now, even with his

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ears open, Berg heard the frantic pumping of his heart, like an accompaniment. He squirmed about on the bed, wiped his sweating palms on his trousers.

Then the drum was joined by a flute. It played ascending and descending arpeggios, then, in a high, piercing register, an incredibly long trill. The drum reached a crescendo of frenzied battering. The flute stopped for an instant, then wavered slowly, then fluttered faster and faster.

Berg ground his fists into his ears, thrust his head under the pillow. He no longer heard the flute, but either the drum or his heart beat so loudly that it did not matter whether he blocked his ears or not. He could feel his heart knocking at his chest. He thrashed about, now stopping his ears, now removing his hands to listen. The music continued—a jumble of the duets he had heard earlier, with new music, played by instruments he no longer cared to identify. A silence would follow, then the slow pounding began again. He tried to stop his ears before the flute came in, but he always put his hands up too late, or took them away too soon.

His heart grew worse. Sometimes it struck so violently that he felt it would burst from his chest, and he would leap from the bed and run about the cell. He raced back and forth, in and out of the bathroom. He turned on the water taps, flushed the toilet, wrapped and unwrapped himself in the red curtain. Nothing helped, either to drown the orchestra or to calm his heart.

At last he saw that the window was growing grey. The instruments played more softly. Berg sat down on the bed. He was panting. His heart still galloped in agitation. The music grew fainter and fainter, as if a wind were carrying it away. At last it stopped. He strained his ears to hear it, and sometimes he imagined that he did, but at last he was certain that it had ended.

He lay back on the bed, but sat up almost immediately. When he lay down his heart reverberated against the mattress. He leaned back against the wall and waited for the breakfast he knew he could not eat.

Added now to the frightening associations brought on by the lights and music was a fear for his heart. Berg had always carefully guarded his health, and this uncontrollable beating terrified him. Perhaps his heart was giving way. He tried not to think about it, not to listen to it, but the more he tried, the more conscious he became of its frantic pounding. It beat so hard that it

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seemed to knock the coffee from his cup as he tried to drink. He could not guide the razor at all; the woman took it from him and shaved him herself. Once again she had to tie the tapes of his jacket.

All that day and night he listened to the pounding of his heart. He hardly cared now whether the lights or music began again. In the morning, after a sleepless night, he tried to force himself to eat and drink. If he did not give his heart some nourishment it might stop and he would die. He forced down a few mouthfuls, then had to vomit. He knew it was hopeless to eat or drink more. When the woman came he handed back the razor and stood in front of the basin, eyes shut, while she shaved him. He could not bear the sight of his emaciated face, of his almost completely grey hair.

During the next few days he sat on the bed or paced about the cell, trying to drown out the sound of his heart. At night he lay on his right side, for this way he seemed to hear his heart least. Even then he slept fitfully, always waking in a sweat, roused by the knocking in his ribs. Nevertheless he drank a little at each meal, and sometimes managed to chew and swallow some bread dipped in soup or coffee.

As before, he began to relax after a few days of unrelieved tension. He grew accustomed to his heart, noticed it somewhat less, and it calmed slightly. He ate more, slept more. Now he waited again, with the same numbness, for the next torture.

He slept and ate well for two days. Then, on the following night, he awakened after a short sleep. He heard a brushing sound about the walls and ceiling. He opened his eyes, turned his head on the pillow, but saw nothing in the darkness. The noise continued.

He grew tense, thinking of leaking pipes, fire, intruders, just as he did at home. Then he remembered what usually frightened him like this. He would turn on the light and inevitably find a large moth circling in the air, bumping against the walls and ceiling in its flight. With a feeling of relief he would shut off the light, forget the moth, and fall asleep again.

But now he could not be sure. There was no way of seeing. Perhaps his cell was on fire. Perhaps it was not a moth, but a bird or a bat. He wrapped the covers tight about his throat and listened.

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Presently he felt something in his hair. It had not been cut since his imprisonment, and had grown rather long. The moth, or whatever it was, had gotten entangled. It flapped and wriggled against his head, trying to escape.

Flinging his arms from the covers, Berg struck at his head again and again, until at last the flapping stopped. He pulled up the blanket again and lay still.

Something crawled along his spine. He dug his back into the mattress and rubbed back and forth, trying to mash the creature dead. It stopped, but he felt another, or more, creeping about his chest and shoulders. He threw off the covers, sat up, and began to scratch himself.

Now the flapping began again, this time around his neck. He struck out, but the moth seemed to elude him. It brushed his neck, tangled with his hair. Then he felt more crawling around his waist and abdomen. Frantic, he beat at his stomach. All the time the flapping continued about his neck and head.

He went on for several minutes, beating, scratching and flinging himself about. He leaned against the wall and rubbed his back and shoulders. Sometimes the crawling and fluttering stopped, and he sat still, waiting. Then something—real or imagined, he could not tell—crept along his back or stomach, and it all began again.

Something crawled along the inside of his leg, up from his ankle. It had nearly reached his knee. He rubbed the other knee against it, but the crawling did not stop. The invisible creature trickled slowly up his thigh.

He put his hand down and scratched violently; now he scarcely noticed the flapping about his head or the crawling around his stomach and back. The insect on his thigh stopped, and Berg waited. Another traveled up the other thigh.

He scratched again, again something came up the opposite thigh. He rubbed first one leg, then the other, rubbed the two against each other. A veritable army of ants seemed to be loose, advancing slowly towards his crotch. Even where he scratched, the insects continued their march. Berg scrubbed at himself until his skin was raw. He was sweating all over and panting from his efforts.

Suddenly the ants were joined by a moth, flapping wildly inside

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his trouser leg. Berg beat it with his fists. It seemed dead, but another fluttered inside the other trouser. Berg smashed it, too.

For a moment he felt nothing, then the moths began again. They were even nearer his crotch. Berg pounded and rubbed, but they were not to be stopped. There were more than he could ever get rid of, and they came closer and closer.

One touched, or he thought it touched, his genitals and he leaped from the bed. He ran to the door and rattled the handle. It did not give. He rolled his bed over beneath the window, leaped up on it and pulled himself up by the bars. There was no escape there, either. The horrible fluttering went on and on.

Berg tore the top sheet from his bed, shook it free of the blanket. He jumped up on the cot. As quickly as he could with shaking fingers, he tied one end of the sheet around a window bar. He looped the sheet about his neck, tied a knot. Then he threw his knees up and clutched them against his chest to keep them from falling back to the bed. The sheet jerked at his windpipe. He went dizzy, and let go his legs to grasp at the noose. He heard his door open. Someone rushed across the floor of his cell. Then he blacked out. Even as he did, he felt the moths still beating about inside his trousers.

IV

He opened his eyes, saw nothing but white. He was lying in bed, on his back, in a long, high-ceilinged room. The cot, like the one in his cell, was covered completely in white. He turned his head to either side and saw that his was one in a long row of cots, their heads placed against the wall. Some were empty, others held men or women lying down or sitting up, propped with pillows. There were no windows in the room; it was lighted by a row of white-shaded electric lamps placed around the walls. The walls curved slightly, so that the entire room formed a semicircle.

Near the end of the wall in front of him, to his right, was an open door. He could see into a dimly lit hallway, with white walls and ceiling, grey floor, like the room he was in. A nurse came in the doorway, down the aisle between the foot of the cots and the wall. She held a tray, which she brought over to Berg's bed and placed on the table beside him. She dipped a spoon into the scratched, tarnished metal bowl on the tray. She brought the spoon up dripping, thrust it into Berg's mouth.

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It was a warm, weak broth. He could barely taste the flavor of chicken in the liquid; it cried out for salt. He opened his mouth, formed the word, but no sound came. For the first time he realized how sore his neck and throat were.

The nurse fed him another spoonful and another. He found it increasingly painful to contract his throat muscles to swallow, but he could not tell the nurse. She went on feeding him as one feeds a baby—spoonful after spoonful with scarcely a pause in between.

The bowl was empty and the nurse took a glass and held it to Berg's lips. He swallowed a tiny mouthful of ice-cold liquid that hurt his throat even more. He took a few more sips, however, for she did not take the glass away. He recognized the drink as weak, cold tea, unsweetened.

The nurse kept the glass at his mouth until he had drained it. His head sank deeper into the pillow, now damp with broth and tea that had trickled from his mouth. His throat ached, and the little nourishment he had just taken had made him very hungry. But he was also very tired. He closed his eyes and fell asleep just as the nurse left his bedside.

At first he was aware of little except the meals which the nurse fed to him. For a day or two they were the same—weak broth, weak tea—but soon other foods were added. There were unsalted crackers, unbuttered toast soaked in warm milk, or strained meats and vegetables such as one feeds to a baby. Berg's throat began to hurt less with this diet. One day the nurse brought a tray of the regular prison fare and left. After several minutes he realized that now he was to sit up and feed himself.

When he had finished he glanced at the beds next to his own. On his right an old man lay motionless on his side, his back towards Berg. On the left a young woman with long dark hair lay on her back asleep.

During the first days, while the nurse was still feeding him, Berg was also washed, dressed, and led to the bathroom by another nurse. At first he could hardly walk from weakness, but gradually his body became accustomed to the activity. Once, walking back from the bathroom, he looked down at his bare ankles. They had shrunk to the size of a woman's wrist.

As soon as he could feed himself, the nurse told him to go to the bathroom, unattended, whenever he needed to. He was also expected to bathe and change his clothes in the bathroom each

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morning. Here he could take a shower, instead of a sponge bath.

When he had regained some of his strength, he was allowed to shave off the beard which had grown in the week or more of his stay in the infirmary. Now it was a young man, in white jacket and trousers like the prisoners, who stood by while Berg shaved. He was short and frail; his only function seemed to be to hand brush and razor to the patient.

When he first looked into the mirror Berg saw the face of an old man. His hair, now completely white, had been shaved close to his head during his first days in the infirmary. His beard stood up in silver spikes from a yellow jaw. His cheekbones and chin jutted out from the skin; his nose was a narrow blade in the middle of his face. The cords of his neck protruded, shifting up and down as he swallowed. A circle of faint blue marks ringed his neck just below the chin.

He went on shaving, staring continuously at the old man who stared back at him. Now and then he stopped, finding something familiar about the bony face in the mirror. He never took his eyes from the reflection.

Every morning a doctor, dressed in white, came down the row of beds to examine the patients. He stripped off Berg's jacket and listened to his heart and breathing. He tipped back Berg's chin to examine his bruised neck, then opened Berg's mouth and peered down his throat. Now and then he said something to the nurse at his side. She wrote on the chart in her hand. The doctor never said a word to Berg, never asked him how he felt.

In fact, no one asked him anything. He was only spoken to in command. He had not said a word since his arrival in the infirmary. Nor had he wished to, except occasionally when he needed something, like the salt on that first day. He found he could get no sound from his throat, and he soon gave up trying.

He spent the days sitting or lying in bed, gazing at the walls, ceiling, or the electric lights. When he sat up he usually dropped his head and looked down at the grey linoleum floor. Every day a boy swept and washed the floor and scrubbed any marks off the white walls.

Now and then Berg glanced at the other patients. Most were evidently more ill than he, for a nurse still fed, bathed, changed them, led them to the bathroom. Berg often stared at them as they lay naked for the bath.

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One day after breakfast the nurse brought him a pack of cards. He stared at it, turned it over in his hands. He turned the deck faces up and began to examine the cards. For a long time he looked at the Queen of Spades; it was the only card that seemed familiar. He went through the pack, took out all the face cards and spread them in a row in front of him. He sat staring at them until the nurse returned with his lunch. She swept up all the cards, put the deck in her pocket, and left.

From now on, morning and afternoon, the nurse brought the cards, taking them away just before mealtime. For a while Berg continued to stare only at the face cards, then he began to study the others. Gradually he remembered the numbers and sequences. One morning he thought he remembered a game of solitaire, and began to lay out the cards in front of him. He had to stop often, trying to recall how the cards should be arranged and how to play the game. When the nurse came he was exhausted. His head felt thick and sleepy and it was an effort for him to think. The nurse did not bring the cards back that afternoon and he took a long nap.

The next morning he succeeded in laying out the cards properly, but he could not remember what to do with them. He tried a few arrangements, but he was sure that they were wrong. Then the nurse came, and he spent his lunchtime still trying to remember. She brought the cards back that afternoon, and just as he finally remembered what to do she took them away.

The next day he really began to play. At first it went slowly. It took him the entire morning to play the first game. Again he was exhausted; the nurse did not bring the cards back in the afternoon, and again he took a nap. The next day he felt fresher and played three games in the morning, more in the afternoon.

Now all he wanted to do was play cards. He could hardly wait to finish his meals so that he could begin again. He wanted to win, and he tried to devise ways of beating the cards. He remembered that his brother used to cheat in order to win, but he, Berg, would never cheat. He wanted to win honestly. He began to study card combinations and the probability of certain cards coming up. He learned to remember which cards had already been played and were "dead." It was not possible to beat the game all the time, but he soon learned to outwit the cards more often than most players.

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One morning the nurse brought, instead of the cards, a pair of heavy boots and a thick crimson shawl. "You're going out," she said.

He opened his mouth to protest, because he wanted to play cards, but no sound came. He got out of bed, put on the boots, wrapped the shawl loosely around his shoulders. He followed the nurse down a corridor to the door.

In front of the door stood a guard in scarlet and gold uniform, his hand on the door handle. Behind him stood a line of prisoners, dressed like Berg. He fell in behind the last person; others came up behind him. The nurse had disappeared.

A whistle blew. The guard swung open the door and the prisoners filed out. Berg went with them.

He found himself in a large courtyard, open to the sky, walled in by a circular building. The courtyard looked familiar. Berg strained to remember when he had seen it before.

The yard was covered with grass, spotted with patches of grimy snow. The grass, coarse and brown, thrust through the snow here and there. In the very center of the courtyard stood a large fountain in the shape of a woman astride a fish. Berg walked up to it, stared at the jets of water that spurted from the fish's mouth and the woman's breasts. Now he could almost remember seeing this before. He walked on, puzzled.

The prisoners had separated and were walking about by themselves. Berg found a bench which the early sun had just reached. He sat down. A young man sat at the other end of the bench. His head drooped; he held his hands, fingers laced, down between his legs. Berg unconsciously took the same pose, although he did not look at the young man. Soon Berg had to wrap his hands in his shawl, for they were stiff with cold. The young man did the same.

Berg looked up. Two birds flew over the Prison roof and circled above the yard, as if looking for food. Finding nothing, they rose, left the circle of the Prison and slowly grew smaller in the clear sky. He watched them until they had dwindled to nothing. Then he looked around at the building.

There were five stories—four unbroken circles of barred windows above, then the ground floor, where each group of six windows was interrupted by a doorway. Three cement steps led up

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to each door. There was no decoration of any kind on the brick building, but at one point between the top story and the roof there was a clock. The hands pointed to nine twenty-seven.

Berg lowered his head and stared at the grass. He was cold and got up from the bench to walk around and warm himself.

The prisoners were brought in for lunch and sent out again afterwards. It was warmer in the afternoon. Berg went and sat on the wide rim of the fountain basin. He looked down at the water, now free of ice and rippled by the streams that fell into it. A dead goldfish floated past him, its silver belly uppermost. It glided under the spout from the fish's mouth and began to turn over and over beneath the force of the stream. Now the bright orange back, now the pale belly lifted toward the surface and flashed in the sun.

Berg looked up at the fountain, and now he remembered where he had seen it before. His life in the cell seemed very distant now, as if it had happened years ago. He lifted a hand and put it under the stream from one of the woman's breasts. The cold water spread over his fingers like a glove. He held his hand there for several moments until it grew red and numb, then he wiped it on his trouser leg and wrapped it in the shawl. He continued to gaze up at the woman until the whistle blew for the prisoners to go in.

The next morning was the same clear, cold weather. Berg went straight to the fountain. The water in the basin was frozen, except for the thin layer spouted by the fountain. The dead goldfish, belly up, lay rigid inside the ice.

All morning Berg sat on the edge of the basin or walked around the fountain, observing the statue from all angles. The fish vomited a great gush of water; two thin streams came from the breasts. In the afternoon Berg bathed his hands in the two jets until the water was too cold for him to bear any longer.

That night he was unusually restless. Each night he had fallen into a deep, long sleep, devoid of dreams or other interruptions. Now he could not sleep. He shifted about constantly, tried his back, then his stomach, his left side, then his right. Nothing made any difference. His heart was beating loudly; perhaps, he thought, that kept him awake.

He worried about the other patients. When he lay still he could

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hear them breathing or snoring. All but he seemed to be asleep. He was afraid that his thrashing about would waken them.

At last he did fall asleep, and he dreamed for the first time since he had entered the infirmary. When he woke up he knew that he had dreamed, and he tried to remember his dreams, but he could not.

He felt very nervous today. He spent most of the morning pacing around and around the fountain. Sometimes he sat down for a moment, but grew so restless that he was soon up again. In the afternoon he grew lethargic—no doubt his bad night was catching up with him. He sat down on the rim of the basin and dozed off, but it was cold even in the sun and his aching limbs soon waked him. He stood up and began to walk around.

When he was warmer he climbed up onto the edge of the basin. He was now standing at the woman's side. His head was on a level with hers, for she was sculptured somewhat less than life-size. He reached out and cupped his hands over her breasts. He tried to stop the flow of water from them, but he could not. The water seeped out beneath his palms, trickled between his fingers. He pressed harder, but the water did not stop. The stone nipples dug into his palms.

His hands were too cold. He took them away, wiped them and wrapped them in his shawl. He looked at the breasts. Their rough stone surface was dark with the water he had spread over them. He put his hands back for a moment, then took them away. The water glistened on the surface of the breasts, then lost its sparkle as it sank into the stone. He put his hands back again and again until they were so numb that he could no longer keep it up. At last he stepped down from the basin, his eyes still on the woman.

That evening he fell asleep immediately and dreamed the entire night, without waking. Awake, he still could not remember his dreams, except that they had something to do with his own house. He felt even more exhausted than when he had gone to bed.

The nurse, instead of bringing his change of Prison clothes after breakfast, brought instead a suit of street clothes. Berg stared up at her.

"What are these for?" They were the first words he had spoken

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since he had been in the infirmary. He was surprised to find that he could talk after all.

"You're leaving today," said the nurse, and walked off with his tray. Berg looked at the clothes and realized that they were the ones he had worn to the Prison. So he was to go home. He felt nervous and uneasy.

As he shaved he studied his face in the mirror. He had gradually come to recognize it as his own, not as that of some stranger. It looked somewhat better than it had at first. His close-shaven hair had grown out. His cheeks had filled out, and the courtyard air had cleared away his yellow pallor. His face was agreeably flushed. Still, he knew that he looked thinner and older than when he had entered the Prison. He could barely remember what he had looked like then; he only knew that it was not like this.

When he returned from the bathroom, wearing his old suit, he did not know what to do with himself. He sat down on the edge of his bed. A nurse was bathing the sick girl next to him. He watched the young woman, lying naked.

She was thin; her ribs arched out from her pale chest. In spite of her thinness, her breasts were unusually large and full. They swung to either side as she lay there on her back. Berg stared at them, fixed his eyes on the dark, purple area of the nipples. He half stood up, stretching his neck so that he could see both breasts.

"Mr. Berg," said a man's voice.

He spun around, his heart pounding. There was the young Prison guard from the Warden's office. "Come with me," he said.

Berg stole a last look at the girl, then followed the guard out past the row of beds into the hall. To his surprise the Warden's office was only a few doors down from the infirmary. He had not expected it to be so close.

The Warden was reading some papers when they came in. On the desk in front of him were a gold watch, some letters, a billfold, and a few scattered coins.

Without looking up from his papers, the Warden waved his hand towards the articles in front of him. The guard went to the desk, took the watch. He raised Berg's jacket and slipped the watch into its pocket in the trousers. Then he picked up the letters, lifted Berg's lapel, and inserted the papers into the inside jacket pocket. The billfold and coins he put into one of the front

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trouser pockets. As he did so he slid his hand slowly down Berg's leg.

Berg could scarcely stand still. He trembled. For a moment he had an overwhelming urge to embrace the young man. The guard finished his work and stepped back into a corner of the room.

The Warden raised his head. He pushed a small card in front of Berg, handed him a pen, tapped a line at the bottom of the card. "Sign here."

Berg took the pen and stared at the card. It read "Certificate of Release" and stated that the prisoner, below named, had been released from the Prison of the Ministry of Arts and Letters in good health, on the day of January the twenty-first. Below this a line read: "Evaluation of Treatment (please check one): Satisfactory, Doubtful, Unsuccessful." "Satisfactory" had been checked.

Berg continued to stare at the card, making no move to sign it. "Sign here." Again the Warden tapped the line. Above it another line, "Signature of Warden," was filled with an illegible scrawl. Berg slowly began to write his name. It was an effort to shape each letter. His hands shook, and he was not sure that he remembered how to write. When he had finished, the letters were broad and looping. They looked exactly like the signatures on his early school papers, when he had just learned to write. The Warden reached over and took the card.

He nodded to the guard in the corner. The man came forward and took Berg by the arm. He led him from the office, down the curving corridor to an outside door. All the time he kept hold of Berg's left arm. Berg held the arm stiffly; there was a sort of tingling in the flesh beneath the guard's fingers. Berg had an impulse to lean against the man; at the same time he could scarcely keep himself from tearing free. By the time they reached the door his arm was numb.

Now the guard opened the door and let Berg out. He closed the door and Berg went down the steps, where another guard motioned him to a taxi that stood by the curb. The guard closed the door when Berg was in. The cab began the journey home.

It was a grey, cold day; it seemed as if it might rain or snow at any moment. Berg, however, felt hot and feverish. He was tremendously exhausted. He closed his eyes, dropped his head, but the motion of the cab and the pounding of his heart kept him

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awake. He could not resist opening his eyes every few moments to see where they were.

The city seemed both familiar and strange. He remembered some of the buildings, but could not think of their relation to one another, nor of the streets that led to them. He could not think how he would reach any of them from his home. He scarcely recognized the streets and houses near his house and was surprised when the taxi stopped in front of his door. The driver let him out, said something about the Prison having taken care of the fare, and drove off. Berg walked slowly up the sidewalk to his door. His man opened it. Berg walked in and looked around while the man took off his coat. Little by little he began to remember the place. He saw that the man had changed nothing during his absence. Berg walked slowly upstairs to his bedroom. Without even taking off his shoes he lay down on the bed. Within minutes he was asleep.

V

For the first few days Berg did little but sleep. The last days in the Prison had exhausted him. He fell into bed each night at eight and did not wake until eight the next morning. He always dreamed, but seldom remembered his dreams. Often he woke just as tired as when he had gone to bed. He stayed at home all morning, doing nothing but walking around the house or garden. After lunch he took a long nap, sometimes until past four. He spent the rest of the day as he had spent the morning.

He did not go beyond his own garden at first. The city still seemed strange to him, and he felt too weary to explore it. He wanted only rest, and freedom from any sort of effort.

After a few days he became restless. He slept less, but at the same time he felt less tired. He was growing bored. One morning he looked in the mirror and decided to grow a mustache.

Now he began to take walks away from home. Dressed in his black coat, white silk scarf, grey gloves and bowler hat, swinging a cane which he did not really need, he strolled along the streets near his house. Gradually the pattern of the city returned to him. Sometimes he took a taxi downtown and walked around reacquainting himself with the buildings there. He never went inside them, however.

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One evening he walked to his club. No one seemed surprised to see him; no one mentioned the Prison or asked where he had been. The slow progress of his dinner, which had pleased him before, now annoyed him. Several times he asked the waiter to hurry, although before he had enjoyed the wait between courses and the opportunity it gave him to eat leisurely and to appreciate the food. By the time he reached dessert he felt so restless that he could hardly sit in his chair; his heart was pounding, his hands perspiring. He finished the meal, got up and left without waiting for brandy and coffee. He never went back to the club again.

He was troubled more and more by a feeling of uneasiness which often made it impossible for him to sit still. Sometimes he picked up a book or magazine and tried to read. But after a paragraph or two he began to shift about in his chair. He could not make sense of the words. Soon he threw down the book, got up and left the house.

He began to spend most of the day walking around in his house or garden, or along the streets. His heart had begun to pound again; he noticed it more and more. He walked to escape its knocking. Again he lay awake nights, listening to the beating, shifting from one side to another. He told himself that his nerves were affecting his heartbeat, that there could be nothing physically wrong with the organ. In spite of these reassurances he feared that perhaps he really was ill. Often he lay rigid on his back, while sweat trickled along his brow and down his armpits. He listened to the hurried thumping, awaited an attack at any moment. He knew that he ought to see a doctor, in order to find out what he should do if he were ill, or to make certain that it really was just his nerves. But uncertainty seemed better than the possibility of discovering that he was to die. He put off telephoning his doctor.

He told himself that if he could begin to work again his restlessness would go away. His heart would no longer bother him. Each night he went to bed resolved to begin writing the next day. On the next day he decided to put it off still another day.

On the day after his release a letter had arrived from his agent, asking if he might arrange a luncheon date. He wanted to discuss any new work Berg might have in mind. He did not mention the imprisonment. In his first weariness Berg ignored the letter.

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Later it added to his uneasiness. He knew that he must do something about it, but he could not bring himself to. At last the agent telephoned and arranged a meeting. Berg did not want to go; he tried to think of every excuse for not doing so. He hoped he might be ill on the appointed day, but he rose from a sleepless night tired but well. He kept the date, and told the agent that he had decided to take a vacation from writing. He did not wish to be bothered about new work. He said that he would get in touch with the agent again when he had something for him.

He left the meeting feeling relieved but guilty. It was as if his father or a schoolmaster had reminded him of a duty which he had put off doing. He knew that the agent simply wanted to know if there was anything in the offing; he of course had his own interests in mind and was not thinking primarily of his client. But to Berg the man seemed to join with the urging of his conscience, and this annoyed him.

He remembered the novel he had planned in his cell. He had sworn then that he would write it down once he was free, but now he did not want to. The novel, which had seemed so good before, now seemed silly and childish. The agent would probably laugh at it.

He told himself that he needed a rest; he had just been through a difficult experience that had probably changed his entire life. He needed time to recover and to think about what had happened. Of course he did not think about it very much. He tried to avoid remembering what had gone on in Prison. He could think only of the statue in the courtyard. He remembered it especially when he was falling asleep. The thought of that naked woman, breasts spouting water, legs clasped about the slippery body of the fish, seemed to excite and at the same time to soothe him.

He now began to wander far from his home. He started walking early each morning, lunched at some dirty little restaurant he had never seen before, walked around all afternoon, and came back late in the evening for supper before going wearily to bed. The long walks gave him something to do. They satisfied his continual restlessness and provided an excuse for his not working.

Often he took a bus from one section of the city to another, then got off and began to stroll around the streets. In this way he came to know parts of the city he had never seen before. He par-

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ticularly liked to walk along the streets of the slums, on dark, filthy sidewalks between sooty buildings. He hardly noticed the shabbily dressed people who stared at him, wondering what such a well-dressed, wealthy-looking man was doing in their part of town. He looked up at the buildings, at the lines of grimy wash strung from one window to another, at the pots of yellowed plants, at the windows so thick with dust that they seemed coated with mud. He watched dogs and cats rifle the garbage pails, strewing the pavement with dirty papers, coffee grounds, eggshells and fish spines. He stopped to look at thin little children with pale, smudged faces and ragged clothing, who played ball in the streets or drew pictures and wrote dirty words on sidewalks and walls.

One day he discovered a small park on the outskirts of one of these slums. He began to explore it. First there was a large field of uncut brown grass, bounded by a circular cinder path like that of a running track. Splintered benches, with worn paint, were scattered about along the edges of the path. Here mothers, with baby carriages and broods of runny-nosed children, came for a little air and sun before going back to the gloom and stuffiness of their apartments. The children played about in the untended grass that nearly reached their knees.

Beyond the field lay a wooded section. A few cinder paths ran among the trees. Some, leading directly to the small pond behind the woods, were kept clear. Others, along the edges of the woods, beside the wire fences enclosing the park, were choked with sticks and dead leaves.

The pond, circular and man-made, was scarcely a foot-and-a-half deep. It was bordered by a cinder path and surrounded by a few small, drooping trees with dusty leaves. Occasionally a child fell in the pond and was fished out covered with mud and green slime. Berg sometimes heard children talk about going to see the ducks, but he never saw any. Only a few small goldfish swam among the litter in the brown water.

Berg now ceased walking the streets and went straight to the park each morning. He stayed there all day, until supper time. He ignored the field and the pond and kept to the woods. They seemed even more inviting to him after he overheard a group of giggling boys make a joke about them. Berg began to wander off the paths, wherever the underbrush was not too thick to ob-

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struct him. He saw a great many strange people here—lovers, men hidden behind trees waiting for young children to pass by, exhibitionists, and others. Berg always succeeded in watching them unseen. As soon as he heard a rustling among the leaves he would duck behind a tree or bush and wait, his heart pounding with fear and expectation, for someone to appear.

He kept up his wanderings in the woods, interrupted only by rain or snow, for nearly a month. Then one day, as he was walking along one of the less-traveled paths, he met a policeman. The man wore the dark blue uniform of the Ministry of Morals and Public Safety. He stopped Berg, and, thinking that he must have entered the park by mistake, warned him that it was a dangerous place. He offered to escort him out. There was nothing Berg could do but accept. The policeman accompanied him out of the woods, past the mothers and their children, out to the street where he hailed a cab for Berg. All the time he talked, in vague and euphemistic language, of the dangers of such parks. After that, Berg did not dare to come back to this park and he resumed his wanderings along the streets. He hoped to find another park.

By now it was well into March, and the weather was changing. The heavy storms of snow and ice had ended, the ground was thawing, and the air was warmer. When April came, and buds and new grass sprang up, Berg could not bear to stay indoors. He did not stop to look at anything; he felt too rushed even to wait for a cab or bus. He hurried from street to street, not knowing or caring where he went. One day, quite by accident, he stumbled on a new park.

It became more and more difficult for him to sleep at night. He thrashed about from one side to another, from his stomach to his back. It never made any difference. However he lay, he heard his heart pound, felt the pulse throb along his temples. Sweating feverishly, he threw off the covers. The air chilled his damp body; he began to shiver and drew up the blankets. In a moment he was hot again and felt the sweat start out all over his body. Once more he flung off the covers.

Usually he did not fall asleep until dawn was near. He dreamed constantly. Sometimes he was chased by wild animals and could neither run from them nor scream for help. Sometimes he was climbing a tower so high above the ground that he would have

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been dashed to death had he fallen. Or he was crawling up a scaffold that swayed and trembled beneath his weight. He often dreamed of walking down one of the Prison corridors, following the curve of the building around and around, walking endlessly past the series of black doors set in white walls.

On rainy evenings he never slept until it had grown light. Even when he closed the window he could not shut out the trickling, seeping sound of the rain any more than he could shut out the drumming of his heart. It seemed that it was not the rain he heard, but all the thousands of twigs, leaves, and shoots creeping, poking, fingering their way out of the earth.

One rainy night he could bear it no longer. He got out of bed, dressed hastily, and went out without taking an umbrella. He was careful not to wake his man.

Outside, he hurried to a bus stop. There was just time to take a bus down to one of the slums which he knew so well from his daytime wanderings. After he got off the bus he hurried about aimlessly from street to street. Then he accosted a heavily made-up, overdressed woman walking slowly along the street. She took him back to her room for the night. He returned home early the next morning in a downpour. The man let him in, helped him off with his drenched clothing and brought his breakfast. After eating, Berg went upstairs to bed and fell wearily asleep.

Now began a new period in his life. Every night he went out, to the slums, to dirty bars, to the parks. Almost every night he found someone new, sometimes a woman, sometimes a man. Usually he went to their rooms, or to some cheap hotel, but after a while he began to bring these new acquaintances home with him. His man served them supper and wine; afterwards Berg and his companion went upstairs to bed. Sometimes they brought other couples with them, and supper was a riotous affair that often roused the neighbors to complain. The man continued to serve as before. He went among the guests with lowered head, stepped over the legs of prostrate drunkards or lovers, put wine or food into hands that interrupted a caress to take it. He never said anything, and never lifted his eyes to anyone's face, even his master's.

Berg spent most of the night with these people. He slept nearly all day, but occasionally went out in the afternoon. Once a police-

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man arrested him for accosting young schoolboys in a park. Berg was taken to the headquarters of the Ministry of Morals and Public Safety, but when the Chief Policeman discovered who the prisoner was, he accepted some money from Berg and let him go with a warning.

In time his companions began to find out who Berg was, and several came to him asking for money. If not paid, they would "talk," they said. Berg did not care if they did talk, but he paid them anyway. Most had bored him after the first night or two, and he did not want to see them again.

He seldom thought of his work. He tore up all letters from his agent, from editors who wanted him to write articles, from admiring readers. He refused to speak to the agent on the telephone. Now and then he thought of his former will to write and he regretted his present inactivity. For a moment he would wish to be back in the past. Then he would feel a sudden relief at being rid forever of the duty to write.

Spring unfolded into summer, decayed into autumn. One evening, nearly a year after Berg's imprisonment, he came home with a woman. His man, as usual, opened the door for them, took their coats and brought them supper and wine. When they had finished the meal the two went upstairs, their arms about each other.

Shortly afterwards the man heard a scream. The woman, half naked, clutching a blouse to her bosom, ran downstairs. She began to sob, babbled something to the man. He could make out little except that something terrible had happened to his master. The man went upstairs, leaving the woman below, still sobbing hysterically. He found Berg naked in bed. He was dead.

The doctor was summoned; he pronounced his former patient dead of a heart attack. The man made all arrangements for the funeral and burial. Few attended the services. Berg had no family, no close friends. His man, his agent, his publisher, a handful of his evening companions and a few curiosity-seekers appeared to watch the coffin lowered into the grave. Berg lay beneath a large, unadorned headstone. Only his name and the dates of his birth and death were stamped on it in large block letters.

Now the world took a new interest in the dead novelist. His books had tremendous sales. Their sensational content, the wild stories of Berg's recent life and elaborated tales of his death

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brought thousands of new readers to the booksellers and lending libraries. A few were put off by the complexities of Berg's style, but most simply skipped the passages of analysis and meditation and kept to the narrative. Regular editions ran out; the publisher reprinted them in cheap paper-covered volumes with crudely drawn, garishly colored covers. For *Doctor Haggart,* which many critics considered Berg's finest novel, the cover showed a dimly lit laboratory. Bottles and tubes of brightly colored fluids lined the walls. A table in the center held a tangle of flasks and tubing and a steaming retort. In the foreground, at the left, stood a girl with long black hair. She was chained by her hands and feet to the wall. In her struggles to free herself, her blouse had slipped down over one shoulder, half exposing a huge breast. She screamed with terror as the doctor, his eyes fixed on her breast, approached. He brandished a huge hypodermic needle.

Berg's books were on every newsstand, in every bookstore and every library, except where church or civic groups had succeeded in having the novels withdrawn. In this case a lively traffic went on in secret. Most libraries had been forced to buy second and third copies of each novel. Nearly every volume soon had to be rebound. Its spine had been broken, the pages loosened. The pages were smudged, wrinkled, dog-eared. Often a librarian could shake out slips of paper which some adolescent borrower had inserted to mark the most explicitly sexual passages.

Conservative and avant-garde literary critics argued back and forth in the letter columns of various publications. The one group claimed that Berg had simply written pornography, the other that he had created meaning and beauty from the sordid history of his life. It was not unusual for preachers to make Berg the subject of their Sunday sermons. They pointed to his life and work as examples of the failure of moral law in the modern world. The public followed the critical arguments, supporting the conservatives; it agreed with the ministers, and went on reading the books.

Everyone had heard of Berg's last months. Everyone expected to find his adventures retold in his novels. Few remembered that he had not written a word in the final year of his life.

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THEODORE ROETHKE

In the Large Mind of Love

Arranged from his Notebooks by David Wagoner

At the time of his death in August, 1963, Theodore Roethke left approximately two hundred spiral notebooks full of rough-drafts of published and unpublished poems, fragments of poetry and prose, aphorisms, etc. His working method usually involved bringing together lines and images—sometimes composed years apart—into a closely knit new structure where their association would suggest additional ideas and altered rhythmic combinations.

During the winter of 1963-64, Mrs. Beatrice Roethke gave me access to twelve of these notebooks, chosen at random and dated between 1949 and 1956. From these I made excerpts of unpublished material and arranged four "suites" or "conversations," imitating as well as I could Roethke's own shifts in tone, diction, and rhythm, as I had learned to know them from listening to him in private and in public since 1947. "In the Large Mind of Love" is one of these four. —D.W.

So much of me already gone to death.
An old wood rich in glory, a true grave,
A lake with swans in the large mind of love.

*

The notion of emptiness generates passion.

*

I stay away from death
By turning toward her face.

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*

I am beside myself, sitting by you.

*

O Protectress of poets and animals,
O Lighter of miscellaneous fires,
Shy children of the moon
Make their way slowly down
The mountain-face . . .

*

I used to think it was all right to be a woman; but it isn't.

*

O my dawn's first dove, I sleep in the dark, the memory of your kiss a mouthful of sand. For me nothing was granted, not even Hypocrisy's undulating smile. I embraced a daft cabbage! She was entranced with my obliqueness. What fever needs is a new mould, an unalterable scum. To the dead,—which way?

(Yes, it's possible to create a true natural order simply by putting things down repeatedly.)

We had Fear for a friend. Even the children are afraid. Love was a time alone, an incantation of the nose. The dead lay upside down. A raddled hag. The worst surprise a corner could have.

When the light sprang back, the town settled into itself. But the seven sleepers awoke. The woods were aware of the moaning of the immediate stone. The veery, the fat-breasted, began whelting the bell of its sorrow. The crow became a goose. No one acknowledged the shudder of the walking bird. All rags flattered the wind.

The mind's eye dawdled, hunting a hole in the wall.

How dare I wave in this necessity, my poor skin and bones unprotected . . . ?

I lost her sweetness when I looked away, having perceived too narrowly the dry borders of the seen, the coarse, the handy, the misery, the wind in the bleak hedges of limitation and passion. I in the sweat and stretch of mind spread too thin; the organ

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justified the function; the wounds were fury; the blondes lay in the sand content with themselves in haphazard America. But it is not true that, as you go West, life gets more trivial. The places retreat into themselves. (I saw; I became.) The sand fleas sat. Among the shore-mastering weeds, the angel never nests. It's hop and scrape when the weather dips. *Einfühlung* can go too far. The masters of nasty congratulated themselves upon having defiled a recently dead superior. Is Christ so fine? The rat's war is against grain. Once, children believed it was fun to sit still here.

(Can't we make this discussion a little more disorderly? I'm not rich but I'm glossy.)

A certain humility before experience is all I ask . . . Of late you've shocked me truly, with the dins of wow, the tears of whang. As well to leave me weary, in a dream that keeps, sweet naught. What I hit with a stick still stares. The mind's eye hates a wall. But these arching familiars, once lithe as the bones of a bird, swell to a rigid purpose, determined as a stone. Is there, after all, an event sweeter than simple seeing? I feel I'm right here. My mother's neighbor gave. Dear Lord, may I be exempted from insects. Do the meek really ever disappear? Indeed I have knees, she said, a high wind over burning water. To know is to love, and the breath of eternity breathes over the sodden field. Slowly the speech of the dead is beaten into praise. An eye walked there, wily as an adder, making a new place pure. Even I can be a mother, giving birth to my father.

*

What's plain and near? The end of your sweet nose.
I look at you and lapse back into prose.

*

Love is the true surprise.

*

The ranges keep their snow.
What lover keeps his song,
The spirit's lonely cry?

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Where true beginnings move
The mind, and make their spring.

That shrinking pelt I called
My soul nailed on the door . . .

*

The fallacy: there's something to be learned in sinning.

*

In the ponds of her being I was the happiest fish;
A cherub dropped in the lap of love.

*

Her sleek side drying at my side:
This lady cannot leave the room:
She's part and parcel of the pride
That is my doom.

*

Remember: the gods themselves loathed the furies.

*

Why should I live in this notebook, already twelve years old,
A child's work, a nineteen-year-old child,
Pleased with herself yet uneasy,—
Yet with an ear! an ear!
And she shakes me now with what she says—
"I began to write when I was quite young.
One day, in the future,— well, I can see that for what it is,
And I know full well that that day will never come.
And so I write usually in the early evening after work and school,
And often again before I go to sleep."
Oh my departed mistress, I still see you walking
Down, down, the long dusty corridor.
The lovely, lonely, awkward, unformed, uninformed young
Whom I love too much.

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*

By taking he began to give;
Astonished, found himself in love.

*

In a place plain as a box,
Her soul found out its work,
Fanning its wings in the dark.

*

If a man lives badly he becomes a woman; if *she* lives badly he becomes a brute.

*

The dying may decide
The way the living love.

*

She was, I'd say, most drearily bewitched.

*

Another time my darling is a dear,
She whispers nothing to my inner ear,
She never kills with kindness, no, not she,
Nor takes advantage of propinquity . . .

*

The heart's core, you will find, is most intractable material

*

I envy the sun at her body.

*

What's the winter for?
To remember love.

*

I'm hot for what is.
I take what I touch.

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*

What can I say she is, this thing of light
Morning to midnight haunting my repose,
Breaking my sleep at five, the last of night?

What will abide? I need a morning rose
And knees to bring me to the narrow ridge,
Will-of-the-wood-thing hunting with his nose . . .

*

I'm sick of women. I want God.

*

Who loved his life can love his death as well.

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IRVING HOWE

A Note on Hardy's Stories

In recent years Hardy's reputation has become unsettled, among writers and critics if not ordinary readers. Taking their cue from Henry James and T. S. Eliot, both of whom condescended toward Hardy, influential critics have charged his novels with coarse melodrama, rudimentary psychology, and an overly-calculating reliance upon rural charms. As a poet, however, Hardy's standing has risen, for his homely diction and contemplative rhythms have made him seem attractive to a generation of writers wishing to roughen their verse with the abrasives of common speech. Yet amidst these controversies almost nothing has been said about his stories.

I do not wish to exaggerate. That Hardy's stories are little read is not a scandal, it is merely a pity. Most of them, serviceable products for magazines, are not worth salvaging; seven or eight are very fine; and one, "The Fiddler of the Reels," can be called great. To write a history of modern fiction or modern poetry without seriously considering Hardy would be unthinkable; to omit his name from a study of the modern short story would be plausible. I would only add to this dominant judgment of our literary criticism that the best of Hardy's stories can still yield a distinct pleasure.

They have little to do with the main line of the modern short story. Hardy cannot be said to have anticipated such masters as Chekhov, Joyce and Hemingway in the short story even to the limited extent that as a novelist he anticipated D. H. Lawrence. There is little in Hardy's stories of Chekhov's psychological plasticity, even less of the impressionistic economy of *Dubliners,* and nothing whatever of the tight-lipped stylization we associate with Hemingway. As if to sharpen the contrast, Hardy's short fictions might be described as tales, since that is to put them in a mellower light and relate them to a more easy-paced and amiable mode of narrative than we can usually find in the modern short story. But before probing a bit further this distinction between tale and story, it may be useful to glance at the place that Hardy's short fictions occupy in his career.

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The bulk of his stories were composed during the 1880's and 1890's, the period of Hardy's most prolific and accomplished work as a novelist. He seems to have regarded the writing of stories as mere journeyman's work by which to earn a living, and to have dashed them off with the casualness of purpose and desire to please a large audience which he claimed to be characteristic—though we have reason to be skeptical—of the way he wrote his novels. Yet anyone who has become familiar with the timbre of Hardy's voice, both in an early work like *Under the Greenwood Tree* and a late one like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* could not fail immediately to recognize a tale like "The Withered Arm" or "The Three Strangers" as uniquely his. Like most short fictions by novelists, Hardy's are fragments chipped off his larger work, or developments of major themes in modest scope, or exercises at sketching the figures and locale of his more ambitious books.

If once you have fallen under the spell of the kind of writer who creates his own fictional world and keeps returning to it in book after book—as Faulkner does with Yoknapatawpha, or Balzac with Paris, or Hardy with Wessex—even his minor stories will hold a lively interest. For in them loose narrative ends may be tied together, bits of information casting light on the novels casually provided, and an imaginary place we have come to know once again exhibited. And exhibited more quietly, more reassuringly than in the full-scale narratives. The reader who has suffered vicariously the blows and disasters of Hardy's major novels may find a special charm in turning to "A Few Crusted Characters," an utterly winning survey of Wessex conduct and idiosyncrasy, free from the darkness of spirit that hovers over Hardy's novels and buoyant with the delight of coming back to a familiar world of youth. Does the pleasure in reading a great novelist's minor work rest on a childlike desire for "just a little more"—another glance at Wessex, its places, customs and people? Perhaps so. But which writer would not give his right arm to command precisely this "naive" response from his audience?

For purpose of analysis we can distinguish between the Hardy who became a chronicler of rural tradition and the Hardy who would all his life remain an earnest, somewhat amateurish student of modern thought. But in the actual experience of the man, as in the texture of his best work, this is not a distinction that can long be maintained. The two Hardys were in fact one.

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Neither as traditionalist alone nor as modernist alone is Hardy capable of sustaining his full creative power. In the first role he is sometimes too winsome, in the second too solemn. His writing, at its most distinguished, fuses the traditional and the modern, the customs of the past and the anxieties of the present. Through this complexity and amplitude of perspective, Hardy was able to brush past the moralism which had almost asphyxiated official nineteenth-century England; and that is one reason he continues to live for us in a way that other, more "solid" writers do not. The pessimistic anxieties of a modern intellectual rub against the stoical bias of a country mind; "modern nerves," as Hardy remarks in *The Woodlanders,* "against primitive feelings." And the result is that in his finest work—four or five novels, several stories, a few dozen poems—Hardy achieves a rare inclusiveness: the natural with the historical, the timeless with the temporal, the inescapable limitations of all existence with the particular troubles of his age.

Now, what crucially distinguishes the stories from the novels is that in the former there is hardly a trace of the "modern" Hardy, the writer who created Jude Fawley and kept fretting himself over "crass casualty" and "immanent will." You could barely know from these stories that Hardy had ever been captivated by the theories of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Julian Huxley; you could never suppose he would keep struggling with the pessimistic visions of von Hartmann and Schopenhauer. In the stories Hardy allows himself to feel more pleasure for the ordinary course of life than he does in the major novels, and perhaps more pleasure than, strictly speaking, his philosophy allows. He relaxes into nostalgia and anecdote; the pastoral impulse flows with a purity he could seldom preserve in his more ambitious novels. There is little in these stories of that thwarted, painful and exhausting struggle with the dilemmas of estrangement which distinguishes *Jude the Obscure;* but then neither is there the cumbered prose, the tiresome philosophizing and the inert submission before intellectual fashion that mar even the best of his novels.

In atmosphere, though not narrative tone, Hardy's stories recall the pastoral fiction of George Eliot. Perhaps the greatest success of this kind among Hardy's shorter pieces is the string of anecdotes, set-pieces and miniature portraits called "A Few Crusted Charac-

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ters." Most of his critics, eager for philosophical big-game, have ignored this work, but to me it seems a minor masterpiece full of that good humor and acceptance of common life which one associates, if not with the English countryside itself, then with a certain tradition in writing about it. A cultivated man returns to his native village after a long absence; allows himself to sink into the pleasures of recollection while taking the carrier's van from the market place and querying the other passengers about the friends of his youth; and then, as the narrative glides from speaker to speaker, he is gradually brought to an enlarged awareness of his past. Except for a sketch of obsessional vengeance, the whole thing is light and untroubled, certainly untroubled by those philosophic notions that burden Hardy's major work. The story-in-the-round structure is familiar enough, but Hardy's ease in rendering country manners and by-plays of humor is a rare thing, possible only to a great writer relaxing with a small effort. Such mild sketching of English country life—whether by Hardy, George Eliot or Mrs. Gaskell—is not much admired in our theoretic age, but in the long run it may require more literary tact to enjoy fiction of this kind than to play with the symbols of *Moby Dick*.

I have already mentioned the distinction sometimes made between stories and tales: it is a distinction all but lost in our usual literary discourse. And that is a pity, since the demarcation of genres helps us to grasp the variety of ends separating kinds of composition and thereby to bring pertinent expectations to the reading of literature. Between story and tale there is, of course, no insuperable barrier, yet for a moment I propose to write as if there were, overstating the case in order to see what might be distinctive in Hardy's short fictions.

The tale is usually told, or re-told, by a speaker addressing an audience that forms a natural or social community. Hardy modifies this method by employing an omniscient narrator, but one whose voice soon reveals itself to be that of a traditional teller of tales. It is a voice leisurely in rhythm, with flourishes of comment and digression, as if quite confident that the audience will enjoy not merely the matter of the narrative but also its incidental flourishes and charms. Suspense remains a primary objective, but a suspense depending on the tactics of a dominant speaker and curiously different in kind from that which is possible to an impersonal drama. By contrast to all this, the story aims at a self-

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sufficiency of context; it usually consists of an action directly rendered, a complete and unglossed impression; and it tends to employ prose toward the effect of transparency.

Between tale and story there is a sharp difference in pacing, what might be called their respective versions of "the time sense." The tale stops, starts up again and wanders, seemingly unconcerned with effects of accumulation or foreshortening: as if the clock were no enemy nor the impatience of an audience a constant pressure. One thinks of a tale as spoken before a fire in a pleasant country-house and of a story as read on the subway to work.

The tale seeks to evoke in listeners a feeling of wonder, sometimes awe, before the strange and the marvelous; the story tends to be more dependent on the conventions of realism. Unburdened by notions about the impersonality of art, the tale may end in explicit moral or philosophical reflection, perhaps in a hushed agreement as to the inscrutability of the mysterious; the story, however, ends in a climax of revelation or a turning of irony, which is also a kind of revelation. The tale compresses a lengthy or complicated action into a brief span; the story exhibits in dramatic fullness a brief action.

These distinctions are of course schematic: to be of any use they must be. Instances can be found, as in Hawthorne, where it seems almost impossible to say whether a given fiction should be called a story or a tale. Then, of course, it does not matter. But to think of "The Three Strangers" or "The Withered Arm" as closer to the tale than the story is to recognize what makes Hardy's short fictions distinctive. That done, we have no choice but to fall back upon the imprecision of ordinary usage and continue to call them . . . Hardy's stories.

Sometimes these stories show a certain kinship—say that of a second cousin—to the traditional English ballad. Hardy himself was aware of this, and rather proud of the traditional sources and characteristics of his story-telling:

> We tale-tellers are all Ancient Mariners, and none of us is warranted in stopping Wedding Guests unless he has something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man or woman.

About this aspect of Hardy's work an English critic, Douglas Brown, writes illuminatingly:

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> One by one the striking things about Hardy's art as a story-teller fall naturally into place as functions of balladry. There is the reliance, especially at the outset, upon the sharp definition of scene and background. There is the easy alliance of the grotesque and disproportionate with the substantial and natural, and the unselfconscious boldness with which they are offered. There are the slighter rhythms and movements of the story suggesting that the sung stanza is never far behind. There are the neat, rounded and intertwining groups of events, the simple and decisive balancing of characters. There is the vivid sense of the meaning of scenery, the human and the natural involving one another. There is the narrative method whereby encounter (whether of person with person, or person with Fate) is the life of the tale.

As in ballads, lovers are crossed and hopes destroyed, sometimes through impersonal agencies of fate or chance, sometimes through the inner unfolding of character. In the country world of Wessex, what may seem to us extraordinary is looked upon, with a credulous fatalism, as quite ordinary. It is here to be expected that a woman wronged, as in "The Withered Arm," will cast a spell upon her fortunate rival and cause her to suffer physical waste. Read with the expectations of conventional realism, this story groans with improbability, yet as often happens with Hardy, it can be valued as a curious mixture of traditional folk-belief and modern hypothesis, assumptions drawn from before and after the Enlightenment. If one cares or needs to—though I do not know why anyone should—it is easy enough to "translate" the events of this grotesque tale into an acceptable instance of character psychology; but the result of such gratuitous sophistication can only be a literary loss, a distraction from Hardy's boldness of narrative.

In some of his stories, the grotesque and demonic are entirely absent, and what claims our attention is a familiar landscape faithfully drawn, solidly sketched figures in their appropriate place, a setting of work, pleasure, and trouble. In "The Distracted Preacher" the stress is comic, a sly thrust at Victorian convention in the person of the Reverend Stockdale, who meets an attractive young widow in a coastal town where, to his dismay but her profit, she is cheerfully engaged in smuggling. The story not only permits Hardy to skim a favorite theme—the overflow of youthful energy past the perimeters of moralism—but also to indulge in zestful descriptions of the smugglers teasing and tricking customs men. Hardy controls the scene expertly, and except

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for a concluding lapse into virtue, he makes no excessive demands upon this material. He does not hover and ruminate, squeeze and prod, as even in his best novels he is inclined to do. He accepts, records, enjoys.

In other stories a similar grasp of local detail is used to support some of Hardy's usual concerns: betrayal, dismay, moral confusion, crossed fates. "The Waiting Supper" is a fine tale about the interplay of personal vanity and social ambition: two lovers are separated through class prejudice, the girl marries a man of higher status only to suffer quick desertion, and years later her spurned lover, now wealthy, returns to woo her. But how different from, how much less exalted and more sadly probable than, *Wuthering Heights*! For the reunited lovers do not know whether the missing husband is still alive; and only late, too late, as they drift into old age, neither quite together nor quite apart, do they learn that the husband is indeed dead. The aging lover continues to propose marriage at intervals, but time has greyed their passion: "Occasionally he ventured to urge her to reconsider the case, though he spoke not with the fervour of earlier years."

The writing in these stories is happiest when Hardy is most at ease in his country world. Then the prose is pure and unstrained; there is no grasping after unearned intensities; the very rhythms suggest psychic comfort. Rarely approaching the sublimity that Hardy can now and again reach in his novels, the best of his stories are also free of the turgidity to which the novels frequently succumb. How delicately he can sketch a rural scene:

> The level rainstorm smote walls, slopes and hedges. . . . Such sheep and outdoor animals as had no shelter stood with their buttocks to the winds; while the tails of little birds trying to roost on some scraggy thorn were blown inside-out like umbrellas. The gable-end of the cottage was stained with wet, and the eavesdroppings flapped against the wall.

Hardy loved the contentment of this world, its freedom from unsettling ambitions and distraught egos:

> Absolute confidence in each other's good opinion begat perfect ease, while the finishing stroke of manner, amounting to a truly princely serenity, was lent to the majority by the absence of any expression or trait denoting that they wished to get on in the world, enlarge their minds, or do any eclipsing thing whatever. . . .

There remains "The Fiddler of the Reels," one of the great, if

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barely-known, stories in the English language. Wessex is the familiar locale, and equally familiar is the disruption and excitement that follow upon a stranger's arrival. But this time Hardy strikes into depths of obsession that he never approaches in his other short fictions.

Into the placid village of Stickleford comes a handsome stranger, "from nobody knew where." Wat, or "Mop," Ollamoor, "musician, dandy and company-man," plays the violin with ravishing beauty, his "chromatic subtleties" lending him a demonic power over listeners, "especially young women of fragile and responsive organization." One such young woman, Car'line Aspent, abandons her village sweetheart because she has become hopelessly enchanted by the sounds of Mop's fiddle. A few years later, abandoned in turn by Mop, she arranges a marriage with her former sweetheart, now soberly employed in London, and brings with her to the city, as a dowry of sorts, the child she has had by the wizard-musician. All seems quiet and stable—until Car'line chances upon Mop fiddling in a country inn:

> A tremor quickened itself to life in her, and her hand so shook that she could hardly set down her glass. It was not the dance nor dancers, but the notes of that old violin which thrilled the London wife, these having still all the witchery that she had so well known of yore, and under which she had used to lose her power of independent will. How it all came back! There was the fiddling figure against the wall; the large, oily, mop-like head of him, and beneath the mop the face with closed eyes.

The dancing grows wilder and Car'line yields herself to a solitary paroxysm, "defiantly as she thought, but in truth slavishly and abjectly, subject to every wave of the melody. . . ." When she finally collapses, Mop seizes their little girl and races off; the concluding note is that Car'line, still safe with her worthy husband, seems not too unhappy that something of hers remains with Mop.

It is a country tale, but told with severity and sophistication. The rhythms speed up, the language swells, a note of tentative abandon is struck. Not even in the quiet of Wessex can there be assurance that a life will not be disordered or exalted by some intruding power, some obsession bearing possibilities of the unknown. Mop himself is kept at a distance, ominous but unexplained: a demon-lover of country taverns, in whom music and sexuality flow together, and the lure of abandon speeds the scrape of a bow.

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NEAL J. OSBORN

Kenneth Burke's Desdemona: A Courtship of Clio?

By way of illustrating his analytical methods, Burke once brought to light an interpretation of the role of Desdemona that has puzzled at least one of his enthusiastic readers ever since. Suspecting that others may have flurried at the same point, and calculating that Burke might yet be irritated to some triumph of explicative rejoinder, I wonder if a more or less benign monkey wrench might not be dropped into the works as presently constituted. First, the relevant passage from "Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method":

> Othello sums up the major cluster of his motives, yielding now frankly to his suspicions:
>
> O! now, for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
> That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
> And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
> The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
> Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone.
>
> In accordance with our method, we cannot lay too much stress upon this speech. For the audience is here told explicitly what the exclusive possession of Desdemona equals for Othello, with what "values" other than herself she is *identified.* [My italics.] Here they are listed: Ambition, virtue, quality, pride, pomp, circumstance, glory, and zest in his dangerous occupation. Within the magnificently emotional utterance, there is thus an almost essay-like summary. Over and above what she *is,* Othello tells us in effect, here are the things she *stands for.* All these non-sexual elements are implicit in her sex, which is enigmatically, magically, by the roundabout route of courtly mystery, the emblem of them.[1]

[1] The Hudson Review, IV (1951), 194-195.

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From this strategic classification Burke is able to develop an interesting case for a dimension in Desdemona's role having more to do with property than with love. But it is possible that the interpretive placement involved denies adequate recognition to an insistent skeletal alignment in the play, one that requires what Desdemona "stands for" to be kept in *antithesis* to the cluster of terms whose importance Burke rightly emphasizes.[2]

Among the premises of the play is the fact that Othello had won success in his occupation long before the advent of Desdemona, whose own dramatic essence would accordingly seem to be that of a new condition, an experimental challenge to the Moor's self-command which will more fully test his fitness to command others. Despite the innocence and loving fidelity attributed to her by almost all respectable witnesses in the play, Desdemona inescapably represents Eros, which in this case at least poses an ominous threat to civic-military occupation. The potential conflict itself gets much foreshadowing emphasis in the first act, particularly in Othello's pledge to the city fathers:

> Let her have your voices.
> Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not,
> To please the palate of my appetite,
> Nor to comply with heat—the young affects
> In me defunct—and proper satisfaction,
> But to be free and bounteous to her mind:
> And heaven defend your good souls, that you think
> I will your serious and great business scant
> For she is with me: no, when light-wing'd toys
> Of feather'd Cupid seel with wanton dullness
> My speculative and officed instruments,
> That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
> Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
> And all indign and base adversities
> Make head against my estimation! (I. iii. 261-275)

But in its final outcome, alas, the attempt to mix occupation and love will show that Othello's proud reliance upon his own discretion was excessive. He will be reduced to accounting for his irresponsibility and terrible violence in terms far more appropri-

[2] Burke undoubtedly considered this opposing alignment, but if he has moved on to a legitimate synthesis there is one reader at least who missed the signals.

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ate to a Romeo's years than to his own: "one that loved not wisely but too well." Even at best, however attractive may be its seeming with young Romeo and Juliet in the garden (but see Juliet later, in her passionately "anarchic" anticipation of the marriage night [III. ii. 1-33], and Romeo with the apothecary [V. i.]), heterosexual love in a Shakespearean work is characteristically and more or less seriously associated with states of rebellious disorder, deceit, madness, or disease; at worst, it is completely demoralizing and destructive. Accordingly, the character of the female as lover, even when we speak of characters so "logically" irreproachable as those of Ophelia and Desdemona, seems unable to escape at least some murky tints from the powerful cluster of forbidding images and ideas surrounding sexual love.

Cause for questioning Burke's interpretation can perhaps be quickest shown by citing parallels of theme and parallels in dramatic alignment to be found in several of Shakespeare's plays. In *Othello* itself, of course, there is the conflict involving "irrational" love, with all its associated passions and disorders, as opposed to the "rational" principles of control, aspiration, honor, and duty. Despite his confident promise to the state's high council, Othello is potentially one of the slaves or victims of unreasoning passion, and Iago is designed to exploit this disastrous tendency. Within the play there are several coordinates that echo Othello's fatal surrender of his reason to the appetitive passion of sexual love and to its linked or resultant passion, violent jealousy. Roderigo is the fool of love, which in this incarnation at least is a more than sufficiently ridiculous as well as ignoble slavery, but although ridiculously embodied, Roderigo's nonetheless immoral as well as murderous passion and jealousy are not without application to the dignified Moor's own situation and character. Reflecting also upon Othello's condition is that of Cassio, for this favored "arithmetician" is the slave of an irrational animality through alcohol, an intoxicant, the parallels of the play imply, which affects some men as love does others, moving drunkards as well as lovers to violate trust, duty, vocation, and honor. Through his relationship with Bianca, Cassio also directly exemplifies the sexual "drunkenness," the "expense of spirit in a waste of shame" that undeniably permeates the play despite Desdemona's equally undeniable innocence. Even Iago, though somewhat implausibly,

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is equipped with the fatal blinders of sexual jealousy, in his suspicion that Othello has cuckolded him, and with those of lust in his alleged desire for Desdemona (II. i. 300-316). (Iago's *use* of lustful language is, however, another matter. Such means are thoroughly characteristic of Shakespeare's muscular satirists of love's folly, who are rarely if ever addicted to love, almost to a man preferring one of its principal Shakespearean antonyms, *ambition.*) The jealousy complication might in fact be considered to threaten the dramatic illusion of "real" or consistent character since Iago is principally identified as one who sees clearly, though perhaps too cynically, through love's illusions.

If Iago belongs to this familiar type in Shakespeare, one motivated by ambition as specifically opposed to sensual values, we can see examples of his paired likes and unlikes in the lean Cassius versus Caesar's better-fed and sensual Antony, or in the maritally delinquent but most martial Hotspur[3] versus Prince Hal (while Hal is under the tutelage of Falstaff, that is). And to mention the Henry IV plays even so briefly is to be reminded that they also depend upon the conflict we are tracing, though in this case it is maximized to the polar opposites of the highest public occupation versus the lowest traps of private sensual appetite.[4] Prince Hal, at least in the beginning, suggests a reconciliation of these mighty opposites, a potential mean somewhere between the civic-military ambition of the sleepless Hotspur and the more comfortable but depraved fellowship of one of Shakespeare's most ancient youths and slaves of the senses, Sir John Falstaff. But Prince Hal's ultimate choice of course is almost puritanically for occupation, to which end he sharply and decisively puts by the perhaps not altogether despised "small beer" of the senses. (Thereby avoiding the tragic failure of less rational, more passionate Othello?)

As wilful young lovers, Romeo and Juliet set the associated loyalties as well as the pleasures of the senses in primary opposition to those accompanying familial and civic duty, though the final blame can be widely distributed since proper familial authority in this play is itself improperly disobedient to the representative

[3] Hotspur not only kept himself a stranger to his wife's bed, but with bawdy wit he parried poor Love's verbal arguments.

[4] A good place to remind the reader that I am not questioning Burke's "socioanagogic" interpretation of Shakespeare in general, but only his identification of Desdemona with Othello's occupation.

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of patriarchal civic authority above it, Prince Escalus. (If fathers wilfully rebel, what can be expected of their children?) Insofar as both roles represent a noble potential unmanned by love, Romeo reminds us of Othello, although the "hey-day in the blood" could not be pleaded in extenuation of the Moor's fatal fault. Juliet, in the garden, is no less appealing than Desdemona in confronting her own "divided duty," yet Juliet exhibits far more of the darkness of sensual rebellion and spiritual anarchy in later scenes (III. ii. 1-30), such qualities being overly associated with Desdemona only through her father's surly prophecy and Iago's villainous interpretations. (*The qualities themselves nevertheless pervade both plays as indispensable ingredients in such Shakespearean recipes.*) A considerable part of Mercutio's role is that of the rough-and-ready soldier (cf. Iago, and Hotspur), and Mercutio also clearly shares the commonly associated function as bawdy satirist of love's appetitive unmanliness. Mercutio's own masterpiece of defamation, the description of love as an idiot who "runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole" (II. iv. 96-97), easily outdoes Hotspur and is not unworthy of Iago's considerable talent for obscene reductions.

In *The Tempest* Ferdinand is provided with an almost explicit test, paralleling Othello's implicit one, which will define the young man's character according to his behavior under the conflict between anarchic passion and the ideal of obedient service to the representative of true authority, both familial and civic, in Prospero. Like Othello, Ferdinand puts loyal service first, but unlike the Moor he will stand the test, winning "occupation" and Miranda to boot. Concerning secondary reflections on this important choice, Caliban (Mercutio's lolling idiot in person) is aligned with anarchic and dark sensuality, but Ariel, after a token rebellion to point the moral, obeys the higher imperative to reason, control, obedience, and occupation. The crux of Ferdinand's test arrives when Prospero has absented himself, thus leaving the young people free to assume that authority will not be able to enforce the log-hauling task it has imposed. Miranda's response to apparent freedom significantly parallels that of Caliban:[5] she suggests truancy to Ferdinand and virtually curses the task her father assigned. But Ferdinand's response is co-ordinate with that

[5] There is attractive mitigation in the fact that Miranda covets illegal advantage for Ferdinand, not for herself.

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of spirited but ultimately dutiful Ariel, and it leaves "will" safely and properly subordinated to reason and duty.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* there appears, once again, the same conflict we are somewhat pendantically set upon reviewing. Antony betrays his vocation for his love, saving himself from the debacle Othello described in "let housewives make a skillet of my helm" only by another such dramatically "dignifying" though desperately unspiritual act of suicide as Othello's own. For the paradoxical resolution—degradation through the inability to regulate sexual passion, but dramatic elevation through the "unselfishness"[6] of self-destruction—Romeo's Friar Laurence would seem to have appropriate saws: "violent delights have violent ends," but "vice [is] sometimes by action dignified" (*R. & J.* II. vi. 9; II. iii. 22). In *Antony and Cleopatra* we might note also that the double role of the female lead lessens the necessity for employing a wicked interpreter, one so important as Iago at least. For Cleopatra plays both wives to her "Othello," during the greater part of the play actualizing the unsavory potential Iago had to create for Desdemona, yet finally rising to a purified self not too far from Desdemona's essential character, the wifely spirit of selfless loyalty. A portion of Iago's role however is provided by Enobarbus, the old-fashioned, loyal, rough-and-ready soldier whose plain-spoken opposition to Antony's desertion of occupation and duty corresponds with Iago's *reputation* for unadorned honesty and loyalty. (Only slightly below the surface of both plays is a conflict that pits the old comrade-in-arms against the intrusive power of the female, both factions being, implicitly at least, in rivalry for the possession of the protagonist.) Perhaps the most savage reduction of love's claims is launched from the "old comrade's" vantage point as the play begins:

> Nay, but this dotage of our general's
> O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
> That o'er the files and musters of the war
> Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn,
> The office and devotion of their view
> Upon a tawny front: his captain's heart,
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst

[6] Unselfish in the sense that by willingness to die for the desired object the lover does "transcend" mere appetite.

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The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,
And is become the bellows and the fan
To cool a gipsy's lust. . . .
Take but good note, and you shall see in him
The triple pillar of the world transform'd
Into a strumpet's fool: behold and see. (I. i. 1-13)

Like Othello, Antony is finally forced to bid despairing farewell to his own military-civic occupation, lost as was Othello's through sexual doting and its associated ills.

ANTONY Hark! the land bids me tread no more upon 't;
It is ashamed to bear me! Friends, come hither.
I am so lated in the world, that I
Have lost my way forever
. . . . . .
My treasure's in the harbour, take it. O,
I follow'd that I blush to look upon:
My very hairs do mutiny; for the white
Reprove the brown for rashness, and they them
For fear and doting.
. . . . . .
Leave me, I pray, a little: pray you now:
Nay, do so; for, indeed, I have lost command,[7]
Therefore I pray you: I'll see you by and by.
. . . . . .
I have offended reputation,
A most unnoble swerving.
EROS Sir, the queen.
ANTONY O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See,
How I convey my shame out of thine eyes
By looking back what I have left behind
'Stroy'd in dishonour.
CLEOPATRA O my lord, my lord,
Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
You would have follow'd.

[7] In his edition of Shakespeare's works (1951), see fn. 23 on p. 1093, Hardin Craig prefers Johnson's interpretation that Antony has "lost command of his emotion" to the more common interpretation that he has lost command of his troops. But if ever case did, this one justifies the Empsonian solution: *both*.

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ANTONY Egypt, thou knew'st too well
My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
And thou shouldst tow me after: O'er my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
Command me.
CLEOPATRA O, my pardon!
ANTONY Now I must
To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
And palter in the shifts of lowness; who
With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleased,
Making and marring fortunes. You did know
How much you were my conqueror; and that
My sword, made weak by my affection, would
Obey it on all cause. (III. xi. 1-69)

Antony may thus parse the blame if he chooses, but plain-speaking Enobarbus puts it unequivocally home (cf. Othello's suicide statement wherein he admits, and punishes, his own failure). Who is responsible for Antony's disastrous loss at sea?

Antony only, that would make his will
Lord of his reason. What though you fled
From that great face of war, whose several ranges
Frighted each other? why should he follow?
The itch of his affection should not then
Have nick'd his captainship. (III. xii. 4-9)

To conclude. It remains difficult to see how Burke can equate Desdemona, even roundabout, with the cluster of terms centering upon Othello's occupation. By role, dramatic alignment, and plot resolution, as confirmed by parallels widely distributed in the works of Shakespeare, it would appear that Desdemona must rather be placed with the opposition, as an innocent yet efficient source of the "itch of affection," a fever whose effects are to prove fatal to Othello's reason, freedom, and captainship. According to the moral judgment implicit in this dramatic pattern, Othello first loses command of himself before deservedly losing command over others. Needless to say, Burke thoroughly succeeded in illustrating his method whether the particular interpretation I have questioned can be defended or not. Also, though far more grudgingly,

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I am obliged to concede that the strategy for the present essay, that of challenging subsurface or roundabout interpretation by surface counterinterpretation, runs some risk of being irrelevant. Nevertheless, in literary analysis it would seem that subsurface inference calls for considerable demonstration, particularly when the surface and the hypothetical subsurface appear to contradict one another (*pace* Freud). Perhaps Burke can be prompted to a more convincing elucidation. But in the meantime, he seems to have left room for the impudent[8] to speculate as to whether this "misreading" of Desdemona's role is radical enough to constitute a motive-revealing break on Burke's own part. If so, does it reveal some tendency to strain after the evidence of historical and sociological things unseen, even if that predisposition requires taking unholy advantage of a valid but tricky principle, the "interchangeability of literary terms"?[9]

[8] The term may be particularly applicable to the author of this article, since the best of what he knows about literary analysis has been acquired from Burke.

[9] Many of the illustrations of "interchangeability" given in Burke's own writings concern the proposition that motives primarily social and political, having far more to do with "order" than with sexuality per se, can be and often are expressed in the images and metaphors of love. Both categories represent areas of human experience in which dominance, subordination, and "courtship" are common.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

AN OPERA DIRECTOR WITH THE SENSE FOR ARTISTIC VALUES that Julius Rudel lacks, considering what unusual work to use for a splendid and costly production—paid for by Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.—to open the New York City Opera's first season in the New York State Theater, would have chosen, possibly, the second part of Berlioz' *The Trojans,* or the original 1869 version of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* with the additional 1872 Kromy scene, or—if he wanted a distinguished American work—Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All.* Mr. Rudel chose instead the Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo* as the work on which to lavish the rich and effective sets by Ming Cho Lee and costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge, the skillful stage direction of Tito Capobianco, and the excellent singing of Placido Domingo and Jeannine Crader and playing of the orchestra in the musical performance impressively conducted by Mr. Rudel himself. There comes to mind Ezra Pound's likening of Wagner's method to that of the Foire de Neuilly: "You confuse the spectator by smacking as many of his senses as possible at every possible moment" so that "you may slip over an emotion, or . . . sell him a rubber ball or a new cake of glass-mender during the hurly-burly." For the dazzling production in the New York State Theater helped to slip over on the audience a mere simulacrum of what it thought of as opera. I say simulacrum because there was the dramatic action—about an eighth-century Visigoth king of Spain undone by passion—that the audience was accustomed to seeing in nineteenth-century romantic opera, but with this only a mere going through the external motions and appearances of the lyrical or impassioned arias, the grand or exalted ensembles which the audience was accustomed to hearing, since their contemporary discordant idiom was incapable of expressing lyricism, grandeur or exaltation. A *Times* article on *Don Rodrigo* based on an interview with the composer included the statement "Berg's *Wozzeck* is its model"; and concerning this one can say not only that *Wozzeck's* nightmarish dramatic action involves and powerfully moves one as the action of *Don Rodrigo* does not, but that Berg's discordant music has an integral expressively intensifying relation with the nightmarish action of *Wozzeck* that Ginastera's discordant music does not have with the romantic action of *Don Rodrigo* (except in the one scene of Rodrigo's hallucinatory dream).

The production was, then, still another and especially striking instance of the wasting of the company's resources on a work not worth producing. But this time there was not only Alan Rich to proclaim in *The Herald Tribune* the advent of "a magnificent new opera" and "one of the great, dazzling evenings in the history of the city's musi-

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cal life"; there was the capacity audience that gave Mr. Rudel himself an ovation when he appeared to conduct the first act and that wildly applauded after each act; and there were similar audiences at the subsequent performances, which led to the scheduling of extra performances. A year ago I described the continuing ballet in which the Ford Foundation made a grant enabling the New York City Opera to produce a worthless American opera in which Winthrop Sargeant heard an impressive product of the explosion of exciting creativity set off by the Foundation's support, whereupon the Foundation made a further grant that caused yet another worthless American opera to be composed, produced by the company, and hailed by Mr. Sargeant, and so on. Mr. Rudel has now extended the cast of the ballet to include other than American composers, additional donors of subsidies, and a part of the public which he has persuaded not only of its obligation to be the audience for the New York City Opera's productions of contemporary opera, but of the value of the worthless contemporary operas the company produces.

This audience filled the theater and applauded wildly also at a performance of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites,* whose mellifluous writing had little musical interest for my ear and did very little for the dramatic action concerning the fear-ridden girl of the French nobility who seeks inner security in the Carmelite order, and, after wavering momentarily, finds the courage to ascend the scaffold with the rest. In this production—paid for by Mrs. Henry L. Moses—the stage action devised by Nikos Psacharopoulos was a continual climbing up and down and over the permanent construction of steps and platforms designed by John Conklin that didn't satisfy the imaginative requirements of the scenes; but the music was sung well for the most part and conducted well by Alain Lombard. After a *Don Rodrigo* in Spanish, Mr. Rudel chose to have Poulenc's opera sung in unintelligible English.

But even the New York City Opera audience balked at von Einem's *Danton's Tod,* causing the cancellation of the performance I was supposed to attend.[1]

What drew me to *Aida* at the Metropolitan was interest in the conducting of young Zubin Mehta, whom an orchestral musician had described to me as operating with a clearly delineating beat and an authority and magnetic compulsion similar to Toscanini's and Cantelli's. And Mehta did in fact appear to exercise a complete control of the orchestra that left him free to give attention to the singers. Moreover, his shaping of the musical progression with dynamics and

[1] After I had mailed this chronicle, a friend who had sat only three rows behind me, in the center of row Q of the Orchestra, for *Don Rodrigo* was surprised by my report of having heard completely natural and agreeable sound in row N, and surprised me with his report of having been deafened by the sound of the brass that all evening had risen to a point in the ceiling where it was reflected down and crashed into his ears. Also, while he had *seen* the chorus singing, he hadn't heard it; whereas a friend of his sitting in the first balcony had heard nothing but the chorus.

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tempo had a plasticity, and in this a continuity and coherence, like Toscanini's and Cantelli's. (It was astounding therefore to read that this plasticity—the knowledge of "when to give a little, when to let a singer breathe, when to permit a slight deviation from the steady pulse of the music"—was for Winthrop Sargeant evidence of a welcome freedom from the influence of Toscanini, with "his adherence to rigid and speedy tempos." Has Sargeant actually listened to the Toscanini recordings of *Aida* and other Verdi operas?) In this performance Mehta's remarkable powers as a conductor were established completely; and he exhibited impressive musical powers that one looks forward to observing further in performances of other works.

Though my earlier experiences of Busoni's music—a sonata for violin and piano years ago, the opera *Doktor Faust* last year—had left no doubt that it represented a will to create without any real creative gift, nevertheless with all the claims for him—notably Szigeti's interpolation during his talk on Bartók at Harvard last summer —I felt obliged to hear Szell's performance of the Piano Concerto with the Cleveland Orchestra and Pietro Scarpini as soloist, in observance of the Busoni centenary. It took only a few passages of the orchestral introduction to cause my guest and me to turn to each other in incredulous amazement; and for seventy minutes thereafter we continued to be amazed and incredulous—to say nothing of the boredom almost beyond endurance—at this pianist's interminable rehashing of everything he had heard in his pretentious piece of worthless *Kapellmeistermusik*. "How do you explain Muck's conducting the Berlin premiere in 1904?" asked my guest. "Busoni," I answered, "was one of the great eminences of the Berlin musical world of that time, for whom another great eminence would conduct the premiere of his concerto with Busoni himself playing the solo part. But there isn't even that excuse for anyone to perform it today."

The one pleasure of the occasion was the marvelous sound of the male voices from Robert Shaw's Cleveland Orchestra Chorus in the last movement. And the next night the beautiful singing of the entire chorus in the performance of Haydn's *The Seasons* that Shaw conducted was testimony to his powers as a choral conductor. The soprano part was sung well by Phyllis Curtin; but all the velvet was gone from Cesare Valletti's tenor voice, and even the baritone of the much younger John Reardon produced throbbing, threadbare sounds.

The London Symphony, reappearing in Carnegie Hall's Festival of Visiting Orchestras, this time with its new permanent conductor, Istvan Kertesz, opened its second concert with a symphony by a young British composer, Richard Rodney Bennett, seemingly expertly put together in an unattractive contemporary idiom which conveyed no musical meaning to me, but calling for the brilliant playing the orchestra did under Kertesz' direction. Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 provided a better opportunity to hear the beautiful tone of the

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strings, brass and woodwinds, the balance, beauty and refinement of their combined sonority, the precision and relaxed ease of their execution, and to observe not only the impressive competence and the straightforwardness of Kertesz' operation with the orchestra, but his gearing of its playing with that of Vladimir Ashkenazy in an admirably integrated joint performance of the concerto. One was prepared by all this for a straightforward and effective dealing with Schubert's C-major Symphony, only to be appalled by the personal show that Kertesz used the work for—the fussy inflection of this little detail, the distorting italicizing of that one, the lifting of the subordinate trumpet line into prominence over the oboe's melody, all done with a display of fancy movement of hand, arm and stick.

Ashkenazy, in the concerto, produced one of the most remarkable performances in my experience. Its basis was his mastery of his instrument, including the tone that kept its beauty throughout its dynamic range, from the lovely *piano* of the very first melodic statement to the utmost *fortissimo* of the crashing figurations at the climax of the first movement's cadenza-like development. And as in Cliburn's playing, this mastery served an equal musical mastery in the production of a statement of the work that was completely thought out and completely achieved to the last and the least note. It was a statement in which, as in a Cliburn performance, one heard the operation of an unfailing sense for note-to-note melodic continuity and for plastically coherent shape—in the crashing figurations at the climax no less than in the melodic opening statement. And so it was, like Cliburn's—but of course in its own personal style that was different from Cliburn's—the playing of one of the outstandingly, supremely great pianist-musicians of today, and not only of today.

The program of the next concert didn't include a great classic to tempt Kertesz to put on a show; and he produced playing by the orchestra and statements of Britten's Four Sea Interludes from *Peter Grimes* and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 (formerly No. 2) that testified to his unusual powers as conductor and musician. Ashkenazy, in Beethoven's Concerto No. 3, pointed up the contrast of the grandiose and the lyrical writing in the first movement, again with unfailing beauty of sound, and again with the unfailing sense for melodic continuity and plastically coherent shape, notably in the cadenza. And the pianistic and musical mastery achieved impressive statements of the meditative slow movement and energetic finale.

At the last concert Kertesz conducted excellent performances of Berlioz' *Corsair* Overture and Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis and another admirable context for Ashkenazy's playing, this time in Mozart's Concerto K.271, and ended with Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, a great classic which he was content to perform straightforwardly and effectively except for the introduction of an exaggerated accent on the first note of every bar in the Allegretto and an excessive retardation in the build-up to a restatement in the

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trio of the Scherzo. The high point of the concert was Ashkenazy's performance of the concerto: with the energy and wit in the Allegros, it offered the superb shaping of melody in the lyrical moments of the first movement, in the minuet that interrupts the finale, and above all in the slow movement, whose cantilena was enunciated with a clarity and power of articulation, a continuity of outline and tension, such as one heard in Schnabel's playing of Mozart slow movements.

I can report distinguished playing of Mozart in the Concerto K.449—clearly and strongly articulated, with grace and elegance in the Allegros and continuity of melodic outline and tension in the slow movement—by another young pianist, Michel Block, who achieved it despite the handicap of an orchestral accompaniment provided by David Blum with the Esterhazy Orchestra that made even the listener nervously apprehensive. Contrasting with this was Charles Rosen's performance of the Concerto K.453 with the Festival Orchestra under Thomas Dunn. I had heard Rosen only on records—in a superb performance of Debussy's Etudes and less successful performances of Schubert's posthumous A-major and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonatas which didn't prepare me for the dainty, mincing, tinkly playing in K.453 that I wouldn't expect from any pianist today, and least of all from one with the intellectual and musical sophistication Rosen has been described as possessing. Nor was I prepared to hear, from the co-winner with Ashkenazy of a Moscow competition, as undistinguished a performance of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 110 as John Ogdon's. I might add that his recital extended my acquaintance with Busoni's music by a transcription titled with characteristic pretentiousness *Sonatina super Carmen,* which was quite the most tasteless specimen of this genre that I can recall.

At Artur Rubinstein's Chopin recital in Carnegie Hall I probably was the only person in the audience who had heard him when he played there the first time after World War I—in a recital in February 1919, and shortly afterward with the New York Symphony. And I was hearing him in a hall again for the first time since then. That was because his rattling off of Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata and the other pieces in 1919 didn't leave me with any strong interest in his playing; and the increasingly flamboyant style of his later years caused me to stop listening even to the performances on records. But on the records of recent years his playing began to exhibit a new continence, repose, refinement and plastic coherence, together with a perfection of execution and tone amazing in a pianist of his age. These brought me to Carnegie Hall for the recital which he opened with a well-structured performance of Chopin's Sonata Op. 35 that included a delivery of the melodic interlude in the Funeral March breathtaking in its tonal loveliness and simple phrasing. The lovely tone was heard also in the cantilena of the Nocturnes Op. 48 No. 1 and Op. 27 No. 2 that followed; but each of the melodic statements that Rubinstein began

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simply he ended with a relapse into the mannered style traditional in the playing of Chopin; and this style kept appearing in the subsequent pieces that in other respects were played very beautifully.

Alerted by a reader who reported a performance of Chopin's Sonata Op. 58 by Van Cliburn in Ann Arbor that was "the strongest Chopin we've heard—with no lingering, no melting, no rubato—with subtlety, firmness, tension and power—very beautiful," I went to Cliburn's recital at Hunter College and heard confirmation of my correspondent's every word except one: there *was* rubato in the performance of the sonata. It was, however, rubato controlled by the unfailing sense for continuity and plastic coherence in Cliburn's powerful shaping of the work. And he exhibited this power not only in the grand style of his delivery of sustained melody in the first movement and the Largo, but in an intensification of the left hand's running comment in the middle section of the Scherzo that was unprecedented. Its powerfully inflected sequences—like the powerfully shaped phrases of melody in Ashkenazy's performance of the slow movement of Mozart's Concerto K.271—clearly were the result of long thinking out and working out; and this was not the first instance of its kind—not the first performance of Cliburn's that was clearly something he had taken a long time to think out for himself to the last detail, and had thought out with the mind of one of the great musicians of today.

I must add that I have been speaking of the performance I heard through the unpleasantly loud sound of Cliburn's piano in the Hunter auditorium; and I had to listen in the same way to the earlier similarly well-thought-out performance of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 81a (*Les Adieux*). The piano's sound made Prokofiev's percussive Sonata No. 6 even more wearying than it would have been in any case; and it made the uninteresting Schumann Intermezzi Op. 4 more so.

The extraordinary musical powers—and in particular the unfailing sense for continuity and coherence in shaping—that operated in Cliburn's Hunter performances of the Beethoven and Chopin sonatas were strikingly evident from the start, not only in the performances of the Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov concertos after his return from Moscow in 1958, but in the performances of works by Schumann, Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin that followed. But they were unperceived by the reviewers who treated him condescendingly as someone capable of dealing effectively with Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov but who had yet to learn how to deal with the music of greater composers. And in the *Times* review of the Hunter recital, what the reviewer had at last perceived was described as something Cliburn had at last learned: "His ability to hold large-scale movements together while investing them with rich details showed a vast increase in that complex composite called musicianship."

To the works from its older repertory—including the classics

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Giselle and *Les Sylphides,* fine modern pieces like *Theme and Variations, Billy the Kid, Fancy Free* and *Caprichos,* and lethal bores like *Fall River Legend* and *Miss Julie*—Ballet Theater added an early major work of Antony Tudor, his dramatic ballet *Pillar of Fire,* which is for the many who find more to interest them than I do in the Tudor style and what it embodies. Of last year's new works the company repeated not only Jerome Robbins' stunning *Les Noces* and Agnes de Mille's pleasantly inconsequential *The Four Marys* and *The Wind in the Mountains,* but Glen Tetley's monstrosity, *Sargasso.* And with these it offered several new works, of which I saw Tetley's *Ricercare,* somewhat less extreme in its unattractiveness than *Sargasso,* and Todd Bolender's *Kontraste,* a filling out of time with little inanities, except for one substantial episode reminiscent of the extraordinary "Unanswered Question" of Balanchine's *Ivesiana.*

But an event of real importance was the fine new staging of Act 2 of *Swan Lake* by David Blair of the Royal Ballet—the first installment of what will be a production of that company's reconstruction of the entire Petipa-Ivanov original. As against the Balanchine version, which makes of the act an entity in and for itself, the one presented by Ballet Theater opened with action related to the preceding act: the Prince dismissed his huntsmen in order to meditate alone in the disquietude he had exhibited at his birthday fête in the first act; and one heard here all of Tchaikovsky's music for the scene, not just the few passages torn out of context that Balanchine uses. And whereas Balanchine makes the Prince's first encounter with Odette an animated *pas de deux* in which he wins her, in the Ballet Theatre version it was a mime scene in which she acquainted him with her predicament. This was followed by the traditional choreography derived from the Petipa-Ivanov original, its effect heightened by the excellent scenery designed by Oliver Smith, costumes designed by Freddy Wittop, and lighting by Jean Rosenthal. But no amount of such heightening could make the steely movements of Lupe Serrano appear to be those of Odette, Queen of the Swans. And this was one of the painful realities of Ballet Theatre's present condition that couldn't be conjured away by wishful fantasies in the press: the company had the dancers for Robbins' *Les Noces;* it had Ruth Ann Koesun and Sallie Wilson who were capable of the poetic lyricism of *Les Sylphides;* it had Eleanor D'Antuono and Bruce Marks who could manage a respectable performance of *Theme and Variations;* but it didn't have dancers with great style in addition to brilliant technique for *Giselle* and *Swan Lake,* which it presented nevertheless, ineffectively, with the inadequate dancers it did have.

During the fifty years of my experience the Metropolitan Opera Company's performances have been given to subscription audiences composed largely of people who were there because it was one of the established meeting places of fashionable society. Certainly the audiences have included—in the upper balconies and even in the Orchestra

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and Dress Circle—people interested in music; but for the large number of music-lovers without subscriptions there have been only the few left-over side seats in the balconies from which only part of the stage could be seen and the music could be only dimly heard—which is to say that only a few music-lovers have been able to attend the performances in inadequate seats, and a large number haven't been able to attend them at all. Thus the subscription system has kept the Metropolitan's performances from being attended by more than a small fraction of the musical public most interested in them—clearly an undesirable situation for a performing organization to be in, and one that an enlightened management of such an organization would want to avoid. But that is the situation in which the New York City Ballet chose to place itself this year.

At the old City Center, the New York City Ballet was in the desirable —and as far as I know unique—situation of being supported by an interested public which didn't fill the theater at every performance but did nevertheless enable the company to show a profit after every season. Much of this support was contributed in advance by those who—receiving the announcement of the season's programs in the mail, or reading it in the newspapers—selected a number of programs that interested them and sent in their checks for them; and these people included the out-of-towners, for example in the universities, who came down for a weekend of programs. This was a modified subscription system with advantages both to the company, which received the money it needed in advance, and to its public, which paid only for programs it wanted to see. And in the course of the season the company received additional income from the box-office sale of tickets for individual performances.

The move to the New York State Theater had immediate advantages for the company in the improved stage, rehearsal facilities and dressing rooms; but it had immediate disadvantages for the public. Much was made of the retention of the top price of $4.95; nothing was said about the price-scaling below that top, which turned out to be disadvantageous to the people who had paid slightly under $3 for the front of the top balcony at the City Center and now had to pay $4 for the front of the top balcony in the New York State Theater that was much higher and more distant from the stage. And if they paid $4.95 for the first balcony they discovered that from the seats on the side they couldn't see the entire stage, and from the seats in the center the dancers looked as though they were being seen through the wrong end of an opera glass. There had been a number of bad seats in the City Center on the extreme sides of the Orchestra and the Mezzanine; but there were a much larger number in the New York State Theater, not only on the sides but in the center.

The company's public could, however, still buy seats for the individual programs it wanted; and if only bad seats were available for one performance of a ballet someone wanted to see, he could buy the

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better seats available for another performance. But even this was ended by the subscription system introduced this year. The appeals for subscriptions were not sent only to the people on the company's own mailing list, whose response would have left a number of seats available for single performances. Instead a number of additional mailing lists were used, as a friend of mine discovered when people in his office, who had never attended a ballet performance in their lives, reported receiving the appeal; and these lists filled the theater to capacity or near capacity for every performance, largely with people who were new to ballet (as was evident from the absence of applause at the entrances of dancers like Villella and Farrell, and from the comments one overheard) and many of whom found it uninteresting (a friend reported a theater completely filled by a completely bored audience; and one now saw people leaving before the end). This left almost no seats for many of the ballet-lovers who had supported the company in the past; and in particular the out-of-towners, unable to make the four trips to New York for the performances in a subscription series, now couldn't obtain the seats they used to buy for the weekend's performances for which they used to make a single trip. Certainly I am all for the company's attempting to increase its audiences and expand the public for ballet; but I must deplore the high-powered and indiscriminate method of doing this that has brought in so many new spectators—including many with no interest in ballet, who are bored by it—as to leave almost no seats for ballet-lovers who have supported the company until now.

At this point I have seen only two of the company's new works. Merce Cunningham's *Summerspace* is a reworking in ballet movement of a piece he made for his own company; and with its attractive pointilliste scenery and costumes of Robert Rauschenberg and what might be described as the pointilliste sounds of Morton Feldman's music, it offers pointilliste movement—a succession of brief unrelated sequences, each concerned with a little pattern of movement in the way a Chopin Prelude is concerned with a piano figuration, but not building up a structure even on the miniature scale of the Chopin Prelude, and not contributing to any larger structure. Some of the sequences are striking and impressive; but some are gimmicky and cute.

Balanchine's *Variations* is a sequence of three settings of Stravinsky's *Aldous Huxley Variation*—the first using a group of girls, the second a group of boys, the third Suzanne Farrell alone. The Stravinsky piece is incomprehensible and ugly to my ears; but the Balanchine movements fitted to it are fascinating to the eye. They are in line with the long solo Balanchine devised for Paul Taylor to Webern music in *Episodes,* which was in effect an étude that exploited Taylor's capacities: *Variations* offers three such études which exploit the capacities of the two groups and the solo dancer in the fascinating invention that continues to come in an unending stream from Balanchine's mind.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

THINGS HAVE COME FULL CIRCLE AT LINCOLN CENTER. The Repertory Theatre began its first season with a decimation of one German classic, *Danton's Death,* and ended it with the dismantling of another, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.* In between, as previously noted, there was an unfortunate bit of wrestling with Wycherley, and an unsuccessful bout of *savate* with Sartre. *The Condemned of Altona* is a pretentious and cloudily garrulous play whose symbolism fails as poetry and whose characters fail as people. As staged and acted by the Repertory Theatre, it affected us rather as *Götterdämmerung* would on the puppet stage. The only interesting thing was Robin Wagner's décor, but five long and otherwise unarresting scenes gave it a little too much exposure. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* got a better critical reception than its predecessors, though I found it no less beside the point. Just as *The Condemned of Altona* was unable to create a world of moribund Teutonic titans with an all too lively skeleton in their closet, this *Chalk Circle* did poorly by both the surface conventions of Oriental drama and the underlying thrust of perversely zigzagging but indomitably enduring energies.

Eric Bentley's translation is just not good enough, and the extra jokes that he has stuck into the text are limp in themselves, and also make the play weaker by necessitating compensatory cuts. Thus, for example, the omission of the song about the soldier in battle who must be neither out front nor to the rear, because only the middle is safe, is a serious loss: that is not only one of the play's main themes, it is also Brecht's *modus vivendi* in a lichee nutshell. The direction of Jules Irving adds its own vulgarities. The monk who performs Grusha's wedding should be a despicable figure, but he would not, while making the sign of the cross over her, clamp down on the bride's breast. ("That's Brecht for you!" said a knowledgeable woman behind me.) The storyteller has no business walking out into the audience and smirking ambiguously at the latecomers. Grusha's song must not get lost in the soughing of the turntable. Azdak, the archetypal *homo brechtianus,* should be more than a jolly old codger. And so on. In trying to be epic, the production manages merely to be cute.

What this venture lacks is what the three previous ones desperately lacked, too: that damned elusive thing "taste." For example, it is bad enough for the music to be Stan Kentonized pseudo-Russian folk songs, but to add a trio of grimly determined girl singers, one complete with guitar, all looking and sounding like genuine Greenwich Village hillbillies, is truly unseemly. Again, how can the key role of Grusha be assigned to Elizabeth Huddle, an actress achingly devoid of charm? I am not talking of beauty, but of that quality which alone can

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invest an ordinary-looking human being in a no-nonsense part with dignity, indelibleness, aroma. Miss Huddle, like inexpensive wine, has no *bouquet*. In a superior production of this play at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Zoe Caldwell, an actress who in plainness can compete with the best of them, made Grusha a creature of such pungency, such appetizing peasant heartiness, that it reminded one for all the world of Cézanne's apples. To seem tough, Miss Huddle had to act bearish; to be powerful, Miss Caldwell was simply pliant and sly. Taste, charm, aesthetics—that is what the Blau-Irving management is short on. Zeal, intelligence, sense of values, spunk, hard work—these are all abundantly there. But the sense of beauty, the aristocratic gesture, the light touch, the subtle understatement, finesse: such things are nowhere in evidence. Unalluring women, plodding men, chunky performances, poor speech, stodgy staging—of these there is no shortage. And it is a pity, a great pity. The plays considered for next season are excellently chosen—but what sort of production will they get?

I do not think we should blame Blau and Irving directly; the trouble is indirect and lies deeper. There was in America a Thirties Mentality in which all artistic activity was ultimately subsumed by some form of radical politics. Style was ideologically suspect, and aesthetics atrophied. This Thirties Mentality lives on today. Blau and Irving seem to me the theatrical equivalents of its literary-critical exponents, the Howes and Kazins, the Podhoretzes and Epsteins. One must admire them for their vitality and intellectual acumen, while one may regret their lack of subtlety, discrimination, and style.

Broadway has come up with one viable play, unsurprisingly enough an import, but this time from Ireland: *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* by Brian Friel. It is particularly interesting as a rather successful attempt to get out of a cultural rut. Just as we have the Thirties Mentality to shake off, Ireland has to rid itself of the "Irish Play." Either in the form of naturalist comedy-drama, or in that of fantasy, the Irish theatre has, with few exceptions, belabored the theme of blathering nonentities boozing and dreaming away impotently while someone in their midst accomplishes a deed of rare chivalric (and quixotic) magnificence; but this act of lightning nobility promptly sinks into the morass of liquor, loquacity, and lethargy. O'Casey's later works are but a depressing record of doomed efforts to break the mold; the Johnstons and Carrolls, with less talent to start with, fared no better. Now Friel has almost done it.

Philadelphia chronicles the last comic-pathetic night of young Gareth O'Donnell in the oppressive village of Ballybeg before emigrating to a new life in the City of Brotherly Love; it also reveals a night of the soul that, for all its being traversed by flashes of death-defying, daredevil wit, may never lead to a dawn. In essence, the play is a duologue between the Public Gar and the Private Gar, played by another actor, in which this conscience (let me refer to it mathematically and punningly as Gar[1]) upbraids, flatters, mocks and bullies

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Gar into action that is never forthcoming, or joins with Gar in sardonically deploring the world around him, or, more precisely, around his neck. Now what makes this unusual and stimulating is not the doubleness of Gar; such devices are not new but go back at least as far as Jean-Victor Pellerin's *Intimité,* and conceivably even to the two angels in *Doctor Faustus.* It is the interaction of the Gars, their whimsical and acerb relationship, that captures our attention and sympathy. Sometimes they become a vaudeville act doing song numbers or comic turns together; sometimes they participate in a tragicomic agon; sometimes Gar is shamefacedly silent while Gar[1] rattles off corrosive tirades and pasquinades that could turn the whole community upside down—which, in this case, would be right side up—if the words could ever get beyond the lips of the mind. Certain reviewers who were bothered by the discrepancy between the brilliant inner satirist and the taciturn outer noninterventionist missed the very point: that the humble, worn outer garment could uncover a rich lining inside if only convention and habit could be defied to the extent of daring to wear oneself inside out. The disparity between the Gars works beautifully for the author: the more preposterously grotesque it is, the funnier it becomes; but the more the implications of the preposterous rift dawn on us, the more frightening and tragic the experience. Friel's comedy is his tragedy, and that is one of the very best things a playwright can achieve.

But there is more. If the characters around the duple (and, therefore, unintentionally duplicitous) protagonist were just the traditional "Irish Play" figures—the faithful female retainer, the bleakly unreachable father, the local politicians, priests, and teachers—the old Hibernian microcosm would once again be revolving around its creaky axis bent with helpless laughter and rusted with impotent tears—although it must be stressed that even these traditional figures are drawn with a winning deftness. Friel, however, brings in two other worlds as well: that of the drunken, uprooted, vulgarized Philadelphia aunt who is making Gar's transplanting possible, but who, with her retinue, suggests that the New World is not such a brave one; and that of Gar's rowdy pals, the disaffected youth of the Auld Sod who, in the perishableness of their revolt, indicate that this brave world is not such a new one. Thus Friel's scope fans out into a broader perspective; and his language, though not consistently fresh and poetic, often manages to bring Ballybeg remarkably close to Llareggub.

The weaknesses of the play come out in the occasional easy pathos, as in two scenes with the sweetheart whom Gar lacks the courage to marry and who becomes the languishing bride of another—though this part suffered also from the uninspired performance of Lanna Saunders. Again, the aunt, though nicely projected by Mavis Villiers, verges on a stock character, a kind of Irish Shelley Winters. But most of the acting is expert, and that of Donald Donnelly as Gar[1]—arrogantly charming and drolly pertinacious, with a singleminded-

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ness that succeeds, paradoxically, in being mercurial—is of the very first rank. Hilton Edwards' direction is graphic in its groupings and musical in its well-modulated rhythms. The production is worthy, and Brian Friel's sobering play is the thing our dreams are unmade on.

If *Philadelphia* was the season's biggest pleasant surprise, *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* was probably its biggest unpleasant one. When read with attentiveness and imagination, John Arden's play about a quartet of AWOL soldiers who try to teach a dreary Northern English town circa 1850 a scarily anti-war lesson, and end up hoist—indeed, strung up—with their own petard, is broodingly unsettling in its Brechtianly contrary provocativeness. But even in the reading one feels that the ironies in Musgrave, the Bible-inspired fanatic who would fight fire with fivefold fire, are not fully realized; nor do some of the characters escape being lay figures. Furthermore, the Brechtian technique of shifting into song works where the main plot is comic or tragicomic; against Arden's shattering story, the poignant but mediocre snatches of song (seldom as developed, integrated, and accomplished as in Brecht) have a deadening rather than heightening effect.

Still, this slowly unfolding attack on brimstone pacifism and implied plea for non-bellicose self-betterment holds the mind more than it does the stage. Stuart Burge, an English director in good standing, has staged the play against aptly spare sets by Ed Wittstein; and Theoni V. Aldredge's costumes, Jules Fisher's lighting, and Dudley Moore's music perform well enough, as do a few of the people. But even as the action should gain in momentum, it slows down and fizzles. I wonder whether the would-be retribution scene can ever be staged for its full impact; at the Theatre de Lys it becomes impacted. The Babel of accent-mangling tongues from assorted American actors is hard to take, and a good many of them mangle their parts along with their accents. John Colicos, an actor of sporadic genius (his Petruchio at Stratford, Ontario, was formidable) makes Musgrave uncompelling—the last thing he can afford to be—and uncompelling in an accent that for congruity sounded like Charles Boyer reciting *Beowulf* in Gallo-Saxon.

Two big theatrical guns also misfired, each with the thud of a cow-pat dropping on asphalt. Tennessee Williams's *Slapstick Tragedy* was really a double dud, consisting of two one-acters, *The Mutilated,* about two elderly feuding New Orleans whores who are reconciled on Christmas by a vision of the Virgin Mary, and *The Gnadiges Fraulein* (umlauts being the least of its lacks), a wretchedly specious attempt at an absurdist play, which it would be a genuine piece of absurdity to try to summarize. To give you some idea of the humors of the enterprise, there are puns like, "It buggers description," witty comebacks like, "You bet your barbecued arse," and extended conceits like, "This morning I did the southernmost write-up on the southernmost gangbang and called it multiple nuptials, which is the

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southernmost gilding of the southernmost lily." And there are flights of religious poetry about bringing "a comfort that is nearly real" to "the wild, the strayed, the queer." I doubt that *Slapstick Tragedy* was much comfort to the wild and the strayed, but the third group may have found it so.

Fully as little can be said for William Inge's *Where's Daddy?*, which was equally short-lived. It was mainly a confrontation of a young beat couple, their union threatened by the coming of an accidental blessing, with a wise, middle-aged homosexual—the young husband's former protector, who now plays good fairy to the unhappy *ménage*. His profoundly commonsensical sallies and aphorisms, some of them delivered while he knits a sweater for his poodle, as well as an innate decency in the kids underneath their hardened, comic-strip exteriors, finally make marriage and family blessedness prevail. Pinky, the aging auntie-hero, is an English teacher who, while correcting his ex-ward's English, makes whopping mistakes himself—"I don't think either of you has answered [those questions] very honestly for themselves"—and this may well be the one bit of realism to have crept inadvertently into the play. Here is a sample of Pinky's wordly wisdom, as he argues against abortion: "It could be the life of a very great man—like Einstein, Martin Luther King, or Norman Mailer." The argument (no mention of Lenny Bruce!) is unconvincing, possibly because the author himself does believe in abortions; why, otherwise, would he have permitted *Where's Daddy?*

James Goldman's *The Lion in Winter* is an attempt to endow a psychologizing family soap opera with dignity by having the family be that of Henry II of England, and by dousing the semblances of plot and character with a heavy perfume of epigrams. As the King and his hissing kin wrangle over the succession to the throne—and how little the author cares about story and dramatis personae is evident from there being neither resolution of the one nor development of the other—we are sprayed with witticism after witticism until the auditorium is fairly awash on essence of Wilde Flower. But the trouble with the epigram is that unless it is very startling and cuts deep, it has no great literary value, and if, moreover, it has nothing to latch onto by way of substratum except more epigrams, it drowns in a surfeit of itself. In *The Importance of Being Earnest* the epigrams both heralded a shocking new cultural dispensation and illuminated recognizable human traits; furthermore, their phrasing had a perfection bordering on the algebraic. But when in *The Lion in Winter* we are told that "in a world where carpenters are resurrected, anything is possible," it is too late in the game to be shocked, and much too early to look for any depth in Mr. Goldman's thought.

All too often Goldman settles for easy anachronistic effects, "The year is 1183 and we are all Barbarians!"; or facile anticlimaxes, as when after murderous family intriguing and clashes Eleanor of Aquitaine sighs, "All families have their little ups and downs"; or

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exhausted jokes like, "They threw the baby out and kept the afterbirth," which figured in the repertoire of generations of medical-school raconteurs. But Goldman waxes more desperate. He uses every ploy from the manuals on How to Dress Up Your Comedy. There is the tastefully simple basic black paradox: "When can I believe you, Henry?—Always, even when I lie." There is diamond solitaire hyperbole, which one dresses down with a neat little aside, preferably in tasty bad taste: "Henry's bed is his province; he can people it with sheep for all I care—as, I believe, on occasion he does. . . ." (Zoophilia is always good for a clean dirty laugh.) A fancy *haute couture* label never misses its effect on the sophisticates: "Ask Praxiteles why he doesn't work in butter." Particularly affecting is the reverse English, whereby what looks at first glance like a very expensive boutique design, turns out to be a sensible little thrift-shop verity: "Time hasn't done a thing but wrinkle you." And, for the groundlings, one must feature an occasional bit of strong (off) color: "Piss on your peace!"

But, of course, the year is 1183: rapiers have not been invented yet, and the wit is broadsword. Once in a while the broadsword will hit home: "There's no point in wondering if the air is good if there's nothing else to breathe"; and Noel Willman has staged what there is of the play with a certain easeful directness and a sculptural quality in the blocking that make for at least a seeming solidity. He has got his actors reading their lines with bounce and precision, avoiding both slurring and overemphasis. Amazingly, he has unearthed several young men to play English and French princes and not sound like American or (if that is not synonymous) method actors; he accomplished this by choosing mostly actor-singers whose very sound-production lends them unparochial, indeed princely, stature. Robert Preston is able to rely on his manly charm and a kind of energy that laughs at itself to make the King both sturdy and delightfully fantastic. But Rosemary Harris once again demonstrates the difference between a highly competent, technically proficient actress and a truly fine or even great one: her Eleanor is always calculated for maximum effect with nothing smacking of mere humanity allowed to peep through.

The only other Broadway play to note is *Hostile Witness,* a thoroughly routine courtroom pseudo-thriller whose one small interest lies in its reminding us once again that a star (Ray Milland) can look splendidly suave on screen without generating the least interest on stage. There are, however, some agreeable comic performances by Geoffrey Lumsden and Melville Cooper. That brings us to the musicals, which, this spring, are distinguished mostly by a confused point of view. The best of the lot is the unpretentious little South African revue, *Wait a Minim!,* in which five young men and three young women sing, dance, horse around, and, above all, play an inexhaustible array of outlandish but aurally diverting instruments from all over. The music is mostly folk, but nice folk, and always a step

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ahead of cloying, leaping from Ireland to Nyasaland, from Haiti to Japan, in the twinkling of an eye, the twanging of a koto, and the banging of a timbila—if that is what one does with a timbila. There are also songs specially written for this revue, such as "Dirty Old Town" by Ewan MacColl, a plain ditty yet potently insinuating and ingratiating.

And even as it caresses the ear, *Wait a Minim!* cajoles the eye with a variety of more or less diaphanous scrims and rattan drops: the colors inherent in or projected onto them, the silhouette effects, the changing shapes of the stage, provide a sweetly unassuming visual commentary. The men are prodigious musicians and mildly amusing chaps, the women move gracefully and look irresistible (Sarah Atkinson's body is already a familiar of my worst-behaved dreams)—and if division of talents there must be, this seems to me the most judicious one. But the happy décor, lighting, music, and costumes must, at times, give way to sketches that are barely funny and running gags that are barely bearable. Exception may be made of a number in which demented knights muck about in blinding and apparently besotting helmets and armor, the whole thing reminiscent of the Shakespearean skit in *Beyond the Fringe,* but why not? Why not, indeed? There must, alas, be serious overtones, and the sundry anti-*apartheid* jokes and sketches are, to put it mildly, shy-making. Still, disparate quality and fuzzy focus notwithstanding, one's forbearance is almost always to the fore: *Wait a Minim!* is minimal in weight but considerable in its youthful, thistledown airiness.

Sweet Charity purports to be based on Fellini's *Cabiria,* but might as well come from the Kabyles, the Kaffirs, or the Khaiber Pass. Neil Simon's book substitutes for the original's bittersweet seediness verging on the sentimental, sheer sentimental comedy verging on idiocy. Prostitutes become dancehall hostesses, predators become bumblers, sex becomes a running gag, a bootless pilgrimage to the shrine of a miraculous Virgin becomes the apparition of a comic fairy-godmother in Central Park, and what was a nice enough film becomes an unholy mess. Add to this unimpressive songs, and repartee that tastes and stretches like used chewing-gum, and you would expect to have nothing. But, astonishingly, the first act of the show is almost rescued, and, at times, even made to glow by Bob Fosse who (I quote the program credits) conceived, staged, and choreographed it with razzle-dazzle inventiveness, though gradually losing out to the book, music, and lyrics. In the second act, stiltedness and listlessness preponderate; but there were those two or three glittering dance and production numbers in the first. Gwen Verdon is appetizing and resourceful, but her bag of tricks is not bottomless; John McMartin has a cunning comic simmer that can flare up into triumphantly nasal trumpetings, but there is not much substance to apply his adroit, idiosyncratic style to. Helen Gallagher is her usual sassy self, but the lackluster mealy-mouthedness engulfs her, too. Something always undercuts *Sweet*

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Charity: if Robert Randolph's scenery is going great guns, Irene Sharaf's costumes will conk out; when a bedroom scene has comic potential, it is well-nigh exaggerated out of its life, and an inept actor (James Luisi) finishes it off.

It's a Bird . . . It's a Plane . . . It's Superman suffers worst from having no point of view, or several embryonic ones militating against one another. Sometimes it is just standard wholesome family stuff, sometimes it camps around halfheartedly, sometimes it professes to kid the pop mentality. The loss incurred by this internecine powderpuff warfare is negligible, since the show has little to offer on any level. It does have one highly accomplished performance by Jack Cassidy, who has no equal in the field of dapper song-and-dance skulduggery; it also has one brief effective scene where the stage becomes a page from the comics, with the characters singing at one another from oblong compartments of various dimensions. An educational-film sequence about Superman is properly and amusingly nauseating, and there is one lyric in which a mad scientist vents his *fury* because they gave the Nobel Prize to Harold *Urey*, though "the shocking thing is/ My heavy hydrogen was heavier than his." Robert Randolph's scenery, once again, is pleasing, and there is one drop that is pure *trompe-l'oeil* delight. Otherwise, *Superman* is a feeble joke about a feeble joke.

Guests from abroad included the Comédie Française and the Bavarian State Theatre. The Comédie began with a *Miser* that made a few lame attempts at being up to date, what with Michel Aumont underplaying Harpagon, and Georges Delerue, the *nouvelle vague* movie composer, providing a disappointing score. Aumont made things dull, however subtly so, and the rest of the cast, barring the always tartly savory Lise Delamare, never rose above the respectably plodding; Jacques Noël's setting and costumes were flimsy and inelegant. I skipped Corneille's Spain for the sake of Montherlant's Portugal, but *La Reine morte* is beginning to catch up with *Le Cid* in creakiness. I still have a soft spot for Montherlant's reasonably hammy but not unfetching bit of theatrical *panache*, yet how it has shrunk since the original production at the Comédie twenty-four years ago! Pierre Simonini's new décor and costumes could not be faulted, but everything else could. Pierre Franck's direction was elementary, not unlike his measly staging of *L'Annonce faite à Marie* for Le Tréteau de Paris, seen here last season. Pierre-Emile Deiber's Ferrante started out arrestingly, but, in the end, the aesthetic-neurotic approach proved much less satisfactory than that of Jean Yonnel in the original production: a grizzled, steely King, pathetic in his very strength. The rest of the cast was undistinguished, and Jacques Toja's Prince downright paltry, though *jeunes premiers* have always been a problem at the Français. *Un Fil à la patte* seemed somewhat more amusing when seen in Paris two years ago, with a slightly different cast. I missed especially Robert Hirsch as the senescent scrounger Bouzin: his acrobatic hurtling down a stairway was funnier than most

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of Feydeau's farce. But I am not very keen on Feydeau to begin with; couldn't we have some Courteline instead? A few of André Levasseur's gowns, however, were quite enticing. And that is what the Comédie Française appears to have come to.

The Bavarians were scarcely more cheering. Goethe's *Die Mitschuldigen* is a wispy comic vignette that was performed with a good deal less than the requisite scintillation—it was Mark Lothar's music that came off best. Georg Büchner's breathtaking masterpiece, *Woyzeck,* was given an unutterably arid production under Hans Lietzau's cloddish direction. Lietzau tried to make this an expressionist play by sticking to the same ghostly pace throughout. Starting the play with the woodcutting scene, which gives us a demented Woyzeck, is already a huge mistake; by beginning with the shaving scene, one conveys the social conditions that drive the man mad. But the errors of taste, judgment, and simple understanding were legion. The grandmother's tale, for example, surely one of the most moving and terrifying moments in all dramatic literature, was deprived of all terror and pathos by the staging and acting alike. The overwhelming line, "Man is an abyss, you get dizzy looking down," was no longer addressed by Woyzeck to Marie's eyes, but to his own image in the water—tragedy reduced to narcissism. The pathetically stolid Andres was played as a handsome, sensible young man; the animalistically sexual drum major became a marionette with Nazi overtones. The transcendent poetry was consistently lost, as was even the humble tenderness; little of the social and intellectual satire remained. Jürgen Rose's permanent set, a roofed-over inner courtyard, made scenes that were supposed to represent the countryside look laughable; and the time it took to roll out a box set for some of the interiors was almost longer than the duration of some of the intensely compressed scenes themselves. The cast, with the exception of Max Mairich's Captain, was mediocre at best, Heinrich Schweiger playing Woyzeck like a dazed gorilla and Elisabeth Orth not beginning to bring out Marie's complexities. Almost the only purpose served by this *Woyzeck* was to prove that Lincoln Center is not the only place where Büchner gets fractured.

The other presentation of the Bavarians, Hauptmann's *Die Ratten,* was so unwieldy and unconvincing a play that the rather better, though conventional, treatment it got under Helmut Henrichs was of no appreciable help. Here there was some forceful acting by Maria Wimmer, a tragedienne of stature, and Peter Fricke and Max Mairich contributed some especially handsome supporting work. (Peter Fricke had been quite remarkable in an excellent production of *The Awakening of Spring* a couple of seasons ago at the Residenztheater; why on earth could not that incisive and swift production, demonstrating how much good there is in Wedekind's play, be brought over instead of Hauptmann's clumsy posturing in the direction of Greek tragedy?) Rose's sets were acceptable this time, and the first half of the play,

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where comedy predominates, was passing fair. Later on, however, the murk took over, at first melodramatically, thereafter risibly.

Off-off-Broadway made it—briefly—to off-Broadway in the shape, or shapelessness, of *6 From La Mama,* a half-dozen one-acters of which I saw three. I could not undertake the second bill: though Kevin O'Connor is an adequate performer, the remaining quartet was histrionically and physically unendurable. If there is anything worse than four faceless and graceless actors in one play, it is four faceless and graceless actors in six. Thus I missed Sam Shepard's *Chicago,* rumored to be the best play of the lot; of the three I did see, the best was—ironically for what is supposed to be a far-out group—the quite conventional *Birdbath* of Leonard Melfi, even marred in a conventional way by a conventional surprise ending. I did, however, find another ephemeral multiple-play production, Jerome Kass's four short pieces presented by the Establishment Theatre Company under the title *Monopoly,* of limited but true interest. Mr. Kass is a young man who has quite a way of making the dismal trivialities of bourgeois (particularly Bronx Jewish) existence come to humorous and harrowing non-life, sometimes by dipping into the Pinteresque, but more often by wringing out of a realistic situation all its latent absurdity. Hardly a joke of his but lays bare something rank and rankling underneath, and he has many jokes. The plays were mounted passably, and confirmed my earlier impression of Carolan Daniels, who appeared in three of them, as one of the most unerringly precise actresses of the American theatre. Her timing, emphases, expressions—the very aura she generates—remind me of the delicately balanced artistry of some supreme *lieder* singer.

The worthy but floundering American Place Theatre came up with Paul Goodman's *Jonah,* a biblical reinterpretation that interprets nothing. The following production was more interesting, Ronald Ribman's *Journey of the Fifth Horse,* a sort of commentary on Turgenyev's *Diary of a Superfluous Man,* in which a real-life situation is supposed to parallel and, to some extent, travesty dramatized scenes from the story. The writing is not wholly devoid of skill, but the play, like Ribman's previous work, lacks focus and ultimate point. Both the Turgenyev protagonist and Ribman's hero lead barren, insignificant lives, and the juxtaposition of the two tells us no more than that life and literature may echo each other. In the light of recent drama, this may be news, but it is not very startling news and, in Ribman's hands, not very dramatic. Kert Lundell's scenery—though not his costumes—impressed me, as did Roger Morgan's sensitive lighting. There is a whole gamut of performances, all the way from Dustin Hoffman's imposing petty would-be tyrant, as sinister as he is comic, down to Susan Anspach's insufferably baby-talking and sniveling ingenue. Larry Arrick's direction tries to cloak the essential hollowness in continuous bustle, but even the bustle is artificial.

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VERNON YOUNG

Three Film-Makers Revisit Themselves

> Artists do not stem from their childhood, but from their conflict with the mature achievements of other artists; not from their own formless world, but from their struggle with the forms which others have imposed on life. . . .
>
> —André Malraux, *Psychology of Art*

INTENDED AS AN ANTI-FREUDIAN MISSILE, Malraux's dictum is in one sense profoundly self-evident: a work of art is achieved with a form-creating talent, not through the exercise of sensibility alone. Since sensibility is not autonomous, however—it must always be exercised by *someone*—the argument is circular. It has often been said that if a given artist had not been unduly affected by his childhood he wouldn't have become an artist at all—at least he would not have become the artist we know. We are never in a position to re-conduct the experiment; hence, we argue against supposition, which is to say against nothing. The question is as unanswerable by Malraux as by anyone. But rich connections between the personal experience and "the forms imposed by life" (not necessarily art forms) are in many instances discernible, and fascinating for their own sake. . . .

Kurosawa, Bergman, Fellini—three creative film-makers: the extent to which they recapitulate the shocks, the hungers, the perspectives of their earlier years is sufficiently remarkable to make Malraux's observation academic. Of the three, Kurosawa's cinema is the least transparent. What we learn of the man, by way of Donald Richie's compendious study of his work,[1] we may well find confirmed in the films—*confirmed,* not exploited. We never feel, in the diverse films of Kurosawa, that proximity (often uncomfortable) of the director's ego to which Bergman and Fellini have progressively exposed us. Here ethnic sanctions are powerfully effective. The culture, as much as the child, is father to the man. Akira Kurosawa was the son of an army officer of the samurai class, whose specialty was rigorous physical education. The boy, though not without prowess, was delicate; he lacked, or suppressed, the belligerent instincts. When

[1] THE FILMS OF AKIRA KUROSAWA, by *Donald Richie.* Univ. of California Press. $11.00 An ambitious project with uneven results. The book will be an indispensable reference for students of Kurosawa in search of biographical matter and source material of the films. While the analysis of the director's cinematography and editing is often brilliant, the book is difficult to read save on brief visits, since Richie tries to say everything and says it twice; nothing is subordinated, every aspect is in relief.

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he went to Middle School he consistently received a zero in military training. At the same time he studied the fine arts, with liberal encouragement from his father. His elder brother—from whom, incidentally, he received his first lessons in cinematic appreciation—was disowned by the father for living with his paramour; one day he left for the mountains where he committed suicide. Kurosawa was then eighteen or thereabout. One need not have been trained in Vienna to relish the sequel: the boy who was on the sidelines of competitive sport and who hated military exercises became the greatest film exponent of, among other things, physical combat. The youth whose brother was victim and celebrant of an inflexible code grew to be the man who now says that his films have perhaps a common theme, the question, "Why can't people be happier together?"—a wholly inadequate and quite touchingly modest rubric with which to account for *Rashomon* or *Living* or even *High and Low*. Closer to what we, ourselves, value in his best work—besides, of course, its always inordinate virtuosity—is his tribute to the novels of Dostoevsky, Tolstoi and Turgenev, which show us the "under-surface" of things. "To be an artist means to search for, find and look at these things; to be an artist means never to avert one's eyes."

In fact Kurosawa confines himself in many films to the surface of things, but his touch on that surface is always incisive and resounding —and one can usually hear the clanking reminder of mortality behind the flapping banners or beyond the sound of thudding arrows. Yet I have a strong feeling that Kurosawa undervalues the samurai in himself; I think Richie, perhaps to oblige, undervalues it, too. His abrupt involvements with social dialectic—in the few films I have viewed to which this description fits—seem to me compulsive, as if he were reminding himself of an obligation; even, it might be, convincing himself that these are the honoured subjects of Western narrative art. I could be wrong, since my deductions are in part arrived at through Richie's synopses of the Kurosawa I *haven't* seen: *The Brave Sleep Well,* for example, or the recent *Red Beard,* of whose merits Richie's verbose praise does not, in advance, convince me.

Fellini grew up bewildered. This is the abiding impression we get from the sum of his marvellous monkey-coloured answers to the questions of Tullio Kezich in the Long Interview.[2] We may infer what we're *not* told, from our knowledge of jungle Italy: the smothering family, the piety, the lack of elbow room. But listen to this man on Movies:

"My first memory of a film goes back to *Maciste all 'Inferno,* I think. I was in my father's arms, the house was packed, it was hot and they

[2] JULIET OF THE SPIRITS, by *Federico Fellini.* Ed. by *Tullio Kezich.* Translated from the Italian by *Howard Greenfeld.* Orion Press. $5.95. The screenplay of that tawdry film takes up two-thirds of the book. Publication was justified by the first third, The Long Interview.

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kept spraying an antiseptic that grated the throat and dazed me. In that slightly opiate atmosphere I remember the yellowish images on the screen of all kinds of people in Hell. Then I remember shots of priests in a large room with wooden benches, black-and-white shots of churches, Assisi, Orvieto . . . . I was always thrilled by the shows that preceded a movie, as by a circus. For me a movie house is a room bubbling with noises and odors; chesnuts, the urine of children; that feeling of the end of the world, of disaster. The confusion that comes before the stage show—the musicians arriving in the pit, the voice of the comedian, the sounds of the girls behind the curtains. Then the people who go out the fire exit in the winter, into an alley, made children again by the cold; someone hums a tune from the picture, people laugh . . . ."

All Fellini's movie-making—the best and the worst of it—is in that paragraph. The delights, no less than the tediums, of his cinema derive from the evocative power of his memory, his ability to evoke and to chide the growing-pains of consciousness, the long abject folly of growing up, the pathos of the unresolved life, the pursuit of baubles. Like most Italians he can also charm the teeth out of your mouth with simulated candour.

"I'm still a little ill at ease because I have a complex about being a little schoolboy—intimidated but somewhat naughty; I'm not mentally free of this. You remember the producer we went to see today. I'm ready to tear that kind of man to pieces when it comes to work. However, that man, apart from work, makes me uneasy, makes me feel profoundly inferior. In front of him I again become a boy, placed under paternal authority, whether it be threatening or benevolent."

The corollary follows, as in Bergman's case.

"Every time I feel that people have confidence in me I am satisfied. It flatters me even when I feel it shows up my shortcomings."

Bergman's case is indeed so well known, in rumor form at least, as to have earned a rest. Yet Vilgot Sjöman's journal of *Winter Light*[3] reports some electrically revealing moments when Bergman consents to speak freely on matters traumatic. On one occasion he tells Sjöman that when he was a boy he was punished, in the fashion of the day, by being ignored, or, when extreme measures were called

[3] L 136, DAGBOK MED INGMAR BERGMAN, by *Vilgot Sjöman*. Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt and Sons, 1963. The title, which suggests a submarine, signifies the SF production number of *Winter Light*. This is a day-by-day journal kept by Sjöman throughout every stage of the film—preparation of script, shooting, mixing, press reception (i.e. in Sweden!). Evidently the book has remained untranslated, except for a chapter, on the assumption that it would interest only 'specialists'—the like of me.

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for, by being shut up in a closet.[4] To this day he admits to a degree of claustrophobia and acknowledges, as well, that nothing more quickly infuriates him than someone's turning away when he asks him a question. Sjöman aptly points out that the subject of Bergman's last three films has been God's Silence . . . . Since authority problems relate to security problems, it is worth noting, on the way, that none of these men feels comfortable beyond his ken. To my knowledge, Kurosawa has never left Japan, Fellini is unpleasantly disturbed by foreign travel —"in the great maternal womb of Rome . . . I feel I can enjoy even fear"—and Bergman says that when Esther, in *The Silence,* looks fearfully out of the hotel window at the city of Timoka, that's how he felt on his first visit to Paris, in 1949. I asked him once if he could imagine making films in any other country. He all but shuddered.

Bergman's two favourite film-makers are Kurosawa and Fellini: Fellini's, Kurosawa and Bergman. Bergman owns a print of *Rashomon* which he must have viewed by now at least twenty-five times. I doubt that he's enthralled by its message of moral relativism so much as he is by its sheer visual declamation, the variable energy, the blend of savage realism and the supernatural—the dark wood, the voice from the dead, the forest heat of the day and the torrents of black rain. Sjöman quotes his brief praise of *La Dolce Vita:* not a word of its socially ramifying scrutiny; for Bergman it's a "baroque tapestry." (A revolutionary judgment in Sweden, where baroque is a term of condescension!) Fellini returns the compliment in kind. "I've never met Bergman but I feel close to him through his films. He is a conjuror —half witch and half showman. I also like his tricks, the spectacle made from nothing. . . ." And of Kurosawa: "Watching *Rashomon* or *Seven Samurai* I become a boy again; I feel an unqualified admiration."

Whatever opinions of these films we may hold ourselves, it is surely refreshing to encounter, in this age of stilled enthusiasm and utilitarian cant, an approach to art that hails its ancient privilege. Bergman and Fellini agree with Flaubert that "the highest achievement of art is to do what nature does—fill us with wonderment." At this point we might be tempted to concede that the most discerning apostle of genius is another genius. Amplify the cross-references, however, and the spell is broken. We do not learn from Richie what opinion Kurosawa holds of either Bergman or Fellini; the European director he most admires (the only one he takes occasion to mention) is Antonioni. Now, it might be supposed that Bergman would be the

[4] Herbert Hendin (in *Suicide in Scandinavia,* State Hospitals Press, Utica, N. Y., 1962) has called attention to the importance for Swedish relationships of the strategy, *tiga ihjal,* to kill with silence. In somewhat Thurberian fashion, Hendin explains: "This tendency to control anger through detachment tends [sic] to result in a general dampening of affectivity and interference with the ability to sustain interest in a relationship. . . ."

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first to divine Antonioni's somewhat parallel gifts; yet, when he saw a sequence from *L'Avventura* five years ago, on television, he dismissed the Italian as being of no importance. Sjöman asked him if he thought he could fairly judge the film on a sequence only. Yes, Bergman thought so. Subsequently he saw *La Notte* and was more impressed. Nonetheless, when last year Antonioni visited Stockholm, as a morose advertisement of his newly opened film, *Deserto Rosso,* and as a guest of the Film Institute, Bergman saw to it that he was unconscionably busy in the cutting room. Antonioni, on his part, made only perfunctory inquiries on the availability of Ingmar. It would make a rich sequence in a movie! Two tomcats cautiously circling each other in the frozen North. Nor is there any finer harmony between Luis Bunuel and our Nordic friend. Towards Bergman, the Spaniard shows all the fine scorn reserved for renegades from the Devil's party. (Time was when Bergman used to sign all scripts and letters with a drawing of a forked demon). Interviewed on the subject (in London, I think) while Sjöman's record was in progress, Bunuel owned to a failing admiration for the Swede who was now "wasting himself on wholly uninteresting questions. What does he ask in every film? God, the Devil and the Good—does God exist?—one simply can't be bothered with such things! He can only sell this quasi-philosophy to a decadent public. Typically, he has succeeded with it in America. Americans, those gringoes, are interested in such stuff." Perhaps in retaliation—Sjöman does not date the continuity here—Bergman, after watching the 'Last Supper' episode of *Viridiana* on TV (again, a sequence only), pronounced the film "singularly tasteless and puerile."

In some quarters there will be dancing in the streets if I emphasize the shared aversion of Kurosawa, Fellini and Bergman towards film critics. Kurosawa contents himself with saying, "I've never read a critic who didn't put false meanings into my work." (One can always shrug, "Well, those *Japanese* critics!") Fellini is routed by the very name and nature of the critical process. On the downward path from his princely affection for *Rashomon* and *The Magician,* we note that he was "moved to tears" by *City Lights* and finds John Ford's *The Informer* "unforgettable." The truth is that Fellini finds too much of the wrong thing unforgettable.

> "I don't measure adjectives when I find something I like, nor does my enthusiasm cool off with critical considerations. For me criticism is a kind of masochism. Why re-evaluate something that has moved you, water it down, control it, kill it?"

The dear man's misapprehension of our noble craft needs no laboured refutation in these pages. And the consequences of his will-to-innocence may be seen in every tasteless metre of *Juliet of the Spirits.* In his most confidently temperamental moments, Fellini has ex-

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pressed, better than anyone, the central catastrophe of European life, which Ortega y Gasset once defined as "the fatal divorce of culture from spontaneity." The Juliet film shows him corrupted by culture, abandoned by spontaneity. And the failure is nearly total; one scene, the Miracle play in the convent school, suggests what was lost. Otherwise, the fun is unfunny, the psychology worse than elementary, the invention puerile—and there isn't a character present who isn't a clown or a freak.

> ". . . there is a time when I feel the screenplay isn't sufficient. . . . Then I open my office. I call in people; I have hundreds of faces pass before me. It's a kind of ceremony to create an atmosphere, one of many and certainly not the most important. When I'm in my office, the door opens and an old man comes in, a little girl, someone who wants to sell a watch, a countess, a fat man. I see a hundred in order to get two for the film . . . ."

This time he saw a thousand to get a hundred. Perhaps he has reached the hour when he can only *talk* a good film—and that, to be sure, is an unmixed blessing. In so far as we're paying attention to the first sixty-four pages that constitute the Introduction and The Long Interview, the Kezich-Fellini book is the only one of the three that empowered my subject which may be profitably read as literature. I don't agree with a word of Kezich's support of *Juliet* but I find him a pleasure to hear: just a Good European whose intelligence is indistinguishable from his culture. How far his editing is responsible for the pith of Fellini's phrasing I can't say, nor do I know, in turn, how much of the happy result is the contribution of Howard Greenfeld, who rendered the Italian into some of the most graceful, nervy English I've read for some time. Fellini on dreams, on actors, on screenings for distributors, on colour (results notwithstanding), on balloons and on marriage in Italy: these paragraphs belong to the best I know among those on art uttered by the artist—Van Gogh's letters, Renoir revisited by his son, Degas explaining why to paint ballet dancers is not a romantic occupation, Arthur Schnabel expressing with tireless variety his disdain of audiences.

Sjöman's *L 136* is exempt from literary standards. The task of getting down as precisely as possible what was said, on and off the cuff, during a job of shooting, over the lunchroom table, or driving to location from the studio, can scarcely be expected to produce a sustained effect of deathless conversation (the less so as everyday Swedish is a language for ravens!). One theme is unalterably clear. Bergman sees critics everywhere, like flying saucers. Relaxing after work by screening Albert Lamorisse's *The Red Balloon,* he decides with murderous glee that the film is a parable of the artist and his critics (not a half-bad interpretation!). When *Through a Glass Darkly* has its premiere, he growls "Typical!" because *L'Avventura*

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has been reviewed on the Culture Page of a certain Stockholm newspaper while his own film occupies the entertainment columns. He complains that probably none of the critics who are holding forth on the subject of his theology have read a single word of Luther's Little Catechism, reads a wild analysis of his work in a weekly picture-magazine by a so-called professor and spits on the page and, even though half his mind is already occupied with his next film, *The Silence,* he is already brewing his vengeance on all critics in an outline which became the dreadful Opus 26, known as *Not to Speak of All Those Women;* finally, he and his Boswell assemble the Stockholm press notices of *Winter Light* and deal the reviewers red or black marks accordingly.

Fully to appreciate this phenomenon you must be willing to go halfway (much further than any Swedish reviewer) with the author of *Suicide in Scandinavia* (cf. footnote 4). Hendin defined "performance anxiety" as the Swedish male's most characteristic hazard; it follows that adverse criticism of performance (or even insufficient praise) will be another turn of the screw. Moreover, Bergman has intensive justifications within the generic pattern. A small nasty Establishment of academic Sweden has never acknowledged Bergman's evolution from poor playwright to great film-maker—*and it never will!* An outsider might find it difficult to imagine the unsleeping malice, each towards another, by which Swedes, within competitive circles, are quite commonly animated. On Bergman's side, no requital seems to be sufficient. Independence, authority and international respect are powerless against the germinal outrage: in his father's house he has been stood in the closet.

"I have sometimes said, and I think honestly, that when a film is finished, it would be the same for me even if it never came out." Thus, Fellini. Obviously, Bergman could not share his indifference on this score: to suffer from "performance anxiety" implies that you expect judgment from others as rigorous as your own. For Bergman, the premiere constitutes the first stage in his trial by ice. Furthermore, despite appearances to the contrary, Bergman is very much a part of the working world. The austerity of his late films represents the puzzling out of a personal syllogism, not an authentic retreat from society. He lives *theatre,* either making it or seeing it, though he made it plain in his ungracious speech when offered the Erasmus Foundation prize for cultural achievement (together with Chaplin) that personal artistic satisfaction is inadequate. Art is insignificant in our time, he protested. "By insignificant I mean that art no longer has the power and possibility to influence the development of our lives." Presumably it influenced *his* development, but he can't forgive history for not having sustained the artist as a lawgiver (assuming that he ever was). Fellini, while haunted by a comparable sadness, puts it with greater tact. "I am bothered by a kind of nostalgia for a more complete morality."

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For whatever reasons of culture or innate spontaneity, Kurosawa emerges as the most self-possessed personality. Richie, rather quaintly, describes him as a "philosopher." Kurosawa appears to hold a few simple convictions which, darkened as they may be by the flux of things, are as rooted, as serene, and almost as old as Fujiyama. Misgivings allowed for, his subject is Man as Hero (to complement Bergman's Man as Sinner and Fellini's Man as Fool). He, too, hopes that art may be educative—he wants his films to be ethically influential with the younger generations—but he doesn't stew over the probability that they won't be. Of the three directors, he alone is wholly contained in his art. Bergman and Fellini sometimes talk as if they were; their performances deny the self-sufficiency. We might wish them the stoicism on which Kurosawa takes his stand, if we could delude ourselves that with it they could have made the films whereby we celebrate them:

> "I am a director . . . that is all. I know myself well enough to know that if I ever lost my passion for films, then I myself would be lost. *Film is what I am about.*"

The italics are mine.

MARY EVANS

Tokyo Letter: Theatrical Happenings

"HAPPENINGS" ARE NOT NEW TO TOKYO, NOR TO JAPAN: they are supposed to have originated in Osaka whence, carried by émigré Japanese painters or the last of the Zen beatniks, they found their way to New York. In Tokyo the Hijikata dance group has been staging happenings for nearly a decade, sometimes with enough notoriety for a fad collector like novelist Yukio Mishima to put the troupe's leader on his dinner list. This year's show had mock urination, a tender drag ballet about unrequited love, ceremonial pouring of water, and—that beloved ritual act—the complete shaving of one side of the head. (By shaving only half the head one is rejecting both religious abnegation and social compliance.) The performance was not really a spontaneous happening; but one can't expect that in a country where a drinking party always has either formal speeches or an impromptu variety show featuring meticulously acquired song or dance specialties by the guests.

All the dancing was done in the masochistically slow, hero-in-chains

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movements fancied by the local avant-garde. On one level or another—physiological, sexual, physical, and spiritual—the evening was almost as death-oriented as one could get, even to being staged in a hall right next to a modernistic pagoda (pre-stressed concrete, compressed temple garden, interior elevator) used for storing cremated ashes. I say "almost" because a few nights later a rival troupe put on a "happening" in a Ginza hall opening with the discovery (and removal) of a real bomb in the balcony and ending when some one present released chlorine gas upon the audience, which, not being that death-oriented, fled.

One might think that these untidy doings could not possibly be compared to a great theatrical tradition like the Noh. It takes a bit of stretching, but it can be done. The Noh is also death-oriented, so completely that the subject—the fact—becomes the beautiful source of all inner experience. The gestures and movements of the Noh are mime based ultimately on reality, but refined and stylized until the dazzled spectator thinks not of the physical world—which is outclassed by what he sees on the stage—but of the mental. One cannot believe in the figures in a "happening" because they are so grotesque: in both cases one has a style of art which uses unreality on a physical level to express reality on a spiritual level.

To oppose levels of reality is absolutely second-nature to the Japanese stage. It happens even in very bad plays. The modern theater troupe Haiyuza did Goethe's *Faust, Part One* complete. Perhaps for educational purposes, the play (put on in the elaborate new Nissei Theater) was given a carefully realistic sixteenth-century middle-European setting. There were cuirasses and cod-pieces, historical prints back-projected, and complete sets for each change of scene. The acting was honestly meant to be realistic, except for that of Faust, who declaimed and kept apart from the common doings. Somehow one thinks this discrepancy was probably a directorial oversight; the real flaw was much more serious: spiritually the play has virtually no meaning to the Japanese, and this was very apparent in the production. After all, the big thing about the Faust legend is that sin springs from trying to master nature and use it for one's own selfish ends. The Japanese do use and misuse nature (think of bonsai), but emotionally they believe their culture is based on a subtle acceptance of its laws. As for evil, whatever it is, it hasn't much to do with sex, and to put stuffed phalluses on the Walpurgis Night phantoms is to discover a splendid comic vein in the subconscious.

Sometimes what is very real spiritually to the Japanese is done unrealistically through misunderstanding. The Modern Theater Group Kumo did a public studio performance of Le Roi Jones's *Dutchman* (a play chosen, according to gossip, because the troupe had gotten the local reputation of being too pro-American). Since the lot of the Korean in Japan is far worse than that of the lowest Negro share-

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cropper, the play certainly has meaning to the Japanese. Although everyone connected with the production had ample chance to know better, the characterization of the Negro was saucer-eyed black-face. In the middle of the play there was added a subway ballet in the manner of *West Side Story;* the effect was jolly and bizarre, and somehow anti-Negro.

The Modern Theater (*Shingeki*) in Japan was started about fifty years ago in reaction to the perfected exclusiveness of the traditional formal theater, and to be a vehicle for modern social ideas. This essentially didactic theater was meant to be realistic in style, but so strong is the pull toward formalism that the actors are paralyzed with conflict: unwilling to imitate the life around them, yet ideologically committed to abjure what is in their very bones. Plays by foreign playwrights are, without any exception I have ever heard of, given a foreign setting; there the actors feel freer to attempt a realistic style because what they are actually doing is adopting someone else's idea—seen in a movie or glimpsed in a theater abroad—of what is realistic.

Last spring Harold Clurman was brought here with a group of Broadway actors to give demonstration rehearsals of *Long Day's Journey Into Night;* this autumn, after he had gone, a Japanese troupe tried to put on the play as he had taught them. Clurman's influence was undoubtedly excellent; for one thing, he taught the Japanese actors to move, and how to move. One hopes he will come again; at the same time one wonders if it wouldn't be a good idea to break all the local inhibitions and stage a play—with Clurman's guidance—in a Japanese setting.

Plays by Japanese playwrights with a Japanese setting are little more than sedentary exchanges of opinions, cafe discussions for a city with no sidewalks. So, it turns out, are Japanese plays with a foreign setting. Yukio Mishima's new play, *The Marquise de Sade,* has de Sade's mother-in-law and wife mulling over what to do about the impossible Marquis; in the end the wife realises his genius has taken him beyond ordinary morality. Given the stuffiness of the ladies' drawing room (managed with excruciating realism by Takeo Matsuura, the best of the *Shingeki* directors), one can but applaud the absent Marquis for his good sense in choosing life—in any form—over all that dreary chatter.

Mishima has made imaginative experiments in adapting Noh and puppet theater techniques; if only he would stick with it. Recently the Noh actor Hideo Kanze has been working with a young playwright and a small acting troupe to produce rather Brechtian plays making brilliant use of *kyogen* (the comic Noh interludes); the actors were trained to perform on ramps, practise acrobatics, and move with witty precision. It was unrealistic, exciting, and the most significant happening in the Tokyo modern theater.

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Reviews

MARVIN MUDRICK

"Evelyn, Get the Horseradish"[1]

THE MOST SURPRISING NOVEL OF THE QUARTER is John Fowles' *The Magus*. Mr. Fowles has two earlier books: a best-seller made into a popular movie, *The Collector;* and "A Self-Portrait in Ideas," *The Aristos. The Collector* is a shocker about a butterfly collector who abducts and imprisons a beautiful art student. "He's a collector," she muses. "That's the great dead thing in him." (Imagine all those impaled and identified butterflies! and imagine, if he ever reads the novel, that old nymphalid-chaser Vladimir Nabokov's apoplectic anathemata in some issue or other of *Encounter* or *The New York Review of Books!*) "What irritates me most about him is his way of speaking," she goes on musing: "cliché after cliché after cliché, and all so old-fashioned. . . ." As for her own freshly minted spontaneities, "I love life so passionately. . . . I love honesty and freedom and giving. I love making, I love doing, I love being to the full, I love everything which is not sitting and watching and copying and dead at heart. . . . I hate scientists. I hate people who collect things, and classify things and give them names and then forget all about them. . . ." Her idea of the earthly paradise is to be taken by her painter friend to "hear the Russians play Shostakovich." Her name is Miranda. The collector tells her his name is Ferdinand ("I've always liked Ferdinand," he thinks, ". . . something foreign and distinguished about it"). She calls him Caliban. *The Collector* is an obese parable about English boorishness, U (the author's and Miranda's) and non-U (the collector's). And *The Aristos* is worse, not even narrative, nothing but sawdust from Nietzsche's lumber room: "I want to propose a new man: I call him the Aristos"; "Mollycoddling breeds weakness; the good upbringing gives freedom to develop, or hazard, within fixed bounds"; "The real death of a pet kitten affects a child far more deeply than the

[1]THE MAGUS, by *John Fowles*. Little, Brown. $7.95. AFRICAN STORIES, by *Doris Lessing*. Simon and Schuster. $7.95. SWANS ON AN AUTUMN RIVER, by *Sylvia Townsend Warner*. Viking. $4.50. THE DREAMS OF REASON, by *Xavier Domingo*. Braziller. $5.00. THE SECRET SWINGER, by *Alan Harrington*. Knopf. $4.95. THE WIG, by *Charles Wright*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $3.95. THE DARK, by *John McGahern*. Knopf. $3.95. A GENEROUS MAN, by *Reynolds Price*. Atheneum. $4.95. COUNTRY OF THE YOUNG, by *Marvin Schiller*. Crown. $4.95. THE COMPETITOR, by *Thomas Bontly*. Scribners. $3.95. THE BEGINNERS, by *Dan Jacobson*. Macmillan. $6.95. HOME IS WHERE YOU START FROM, by *Gene Horowitz*. Norton. $4.50. CRIERS AND KIBITZERS, KIBITZERS AND CRIERS, by *Stanley Elkin*. Random House. $4.95. IN PRAISE OF OLDER WOMEN, by *Stephen Vizinczey*. Trident Press. $4.95.

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'deaths' of all the television gangsters, cowboys and Red Indians." Or rather, as this last harrumph suggests, Mr. Fowles cannot even keep Nietzsche clear of the humanistic banalities to which the *Übermensch* was the intended antidote. Confronted, then, with a third Fowles book half again as long as his first two put together, the reviewer faints and fails.

Yet *The Magus* is a shrewd and lively, brilliantly visualized, continuously provoking and entertaining novel; above all, a prodigy of ingenuity. In plot and structure it is an immense charade, organized from within the novel by "the Magus," Maurice Conchis, a Greek multi-millionaire who seems, ultimately, to have suborned the world in the service of his "godgame." Whatever "happens" to Nicholas Urfe, a young Englishman teaching in a school on a small Greek island, turns out to have been planned by Conchis, with a precise and ineluctable calculation of "hazard" that deprives Nicholas of any power except, if he will take it, the power to understand. Mr. Fowles' contrivance of astonishing "events" (everything here requires hedges of quotation marks to set off its deliberate choreographic strangeness), his skill at conjuring up stagefuls of unexpected appearances, is unapologetic and inexhaustible. Many of the special charades within the grand one are impressive, notably a trial scene in which a tribunal of mock-psychologists indicts Nicholas—and twentieth-century man—in a jargon that has no scruples against simultaneously indicting itself:

> "The motives for . . . [his] attitude spring from an only partly resolved Oedipal complex. The subject shows characteristic symptoms of mingled fear and resentment of authority, especially male authority and the usual accompanying basic syndrome: an ambivalent attitude towards women, in which they are seen both as desired objects and as objects which have betrayed him, and therefore merit his revenge and counterbetrayal.
>
> "Time has not allowed us to investigate the subject's specific womb and breast separation traumas, but the compensatory mechanisms he has evolved are so frequent among so-called intellectuals that we may posit with certainty a troubled period of separation from the maternal breast. . . ."

If only, among all the "mysteries," there were mysteries—not endless puzzle-chains, exploding cigars, flowers that metamorphose into octopi and squirt ink. Eventually the reader is as confused as Nicholas, as resistant to appearances as a laboratory rat convinced, by glum experience, that certain scraps of cheese—just which ones, he cannot tell—secrete not flavor but a disagreeable jolt to his nervous system. What, after all, is *true?* What has happened, and what has merely "happened"? Can we trust anybody to be what he seems, mean what he says? Is there ever an exit into light from these crooked and mirrored corridors? And once one begins to ask such questions of the novel, one begins to question the characters themselves: Conchis, who

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plays Bach on the harpsichord, is otherwise memorable for looking like Picasso and Gandhi, and delivers aphorisms more elegant but not usually more substantial than the Aristos'; Lily, that deceitful blossom; Alison, the decent sort, who may be crude and simple but can give and give, a natural if not cultivated pearl of womanhood; Mrs. de Seitas, Conchis' No. 1 disciple—

> "How shall I explain to you? If Maurice were here he would tell you that sex is perhaps a greater, but in no way a different, pleasure from any other. He would tell you that it is only one part—and not the essential part—in the relationship we call love. He would tell you that the essential part is truth, the trust two people build between their minds. Their souls. What you will. That the real infidelity is the one that hides the sexual infidelity. Because the one thing that must never come between two people who have offered each other *love is a lie.*"

The Magus may well be, when it sticks to its job of mystification, one of the best "mystery stories" ever written, and unlike most such it is most of its length no soporific or insult but an incitement to consciousness. Mr. Fowles won't, however, be content with his machinery and its often dazzling effects, or the customary normalizing disclosures at the end. He wants much more; his Aristos-avatar is bursting with judgments of the modern world (we are instructed, for instance, that the Nazis were inhuman and mad, though some Germans were not), with final wisdom like Mrs. de Seitas' on the nature of love.

Sometimes final wisdom seems a flaw not in the novelist's temperament but in his subject: Doris Lessing's colonial Africa, for example, which sets white against black, man against nature, in elementary, repetitive, and perhaps inevitable patterns. It becomes increasingly difficult to describe Mrs. Lessing as the best living English writer of fiction, though she probably is. Even her best novel, *The Golden Notebook,* is a candid and lavish confession of her inability to write a novel; and her claim is most persuasively made in only a few short stories, chiefly from her volume *A Man and Two Women. African Stories* is a compilation of all the stories she has published about Africa. They are intelligent, beautifully literate, accurately observed, and—barring one or two modest stories about the ordinariness rather than the tensions or drabness of African farm life—totally unstartling accounts of a subject that she cannot see, or that cannot be seen, *except* as white and black (local color!), oppressor and oppressed. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is said to have helped precipitate the American Civil War; and Mrs. Lessing may have hoped for similar modern consequences from her own sophisticated stories about the black man's burden. But to know what you mean before you write it is not a way of writing fiction.

The veteran Miss Warner, on the other hand, is untroubled by any preconceptions except malice and a taste for spookiness; and so her

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stories, though slight, have often an open and empirical air that allows her to expound and be wise because she would obviously rather specify:

> There are some women, Meg was one of them, in whom conscience is so strongly developed that it leaves little room for anything else. Love is scarcely felt before duty rushes to encase it, anger is impossible because one must always be calm and see both sides, pity evaporates in expedients, even grief is felt as a sort of bruised sense of injury, a resentment that one should have grief forced upon one when one has always acted for the best.

People are likely to do silly things and Miss Warner is there to observe—as when, in "Heathy Landscape with Dormouse," Belinda furiously abandons her husband and her mother to their picnic conversation:

> "How delicious lettuce sandwiches are!" Mrs. Leslie said. "So much the most comfortable way of managing lettuces, don't you think, Leo?"
>
> "Infinitely. Do you know that lettuce is a mild sedative?"
>
> "Is it? I never knew that. Belinda, do have another lettuce sandwich."
>
> "No, thank you."
>
> "But only very mild," continued Leo.
>
> Belinda sprang to her feet, took a cigarette from her bag, lit it, and walked away.
>
> "She never really cares for Unwin's cakes," explained her mother. "But do try one. You might."
>
> "Thank you. I'd love one."
>
> Apparently he was doomed to failure in his loves, for the cake tasted of sweat and cough linctus. He laid it down where presently he would be able to trample on it, and stared after Belinda. Mrs. Leslie noticed his stare
>
> "Belinda walks exactly like her father."
>
> "She walks beautifully."
>
> "Yes, doesn't she? I wonder where she's going."
>
> "She seems to be making for the car."

Or ("Fenella") a girl gazes at a life-size wax image in an Italian church until she recognizes it as a moldering corpse; or ("Johnnie Brewer") a young man, back in England for a visit with his grandmother and great-aunt, discovers that the ancient ladies yearn to share his bed with him. The astonishing story of the collection is "A Love Match," which shows up Mann's "The Blood of the Walsungs" for the Freudo-Wagnerian trumpery it is, and manages to transform incest into a domestic English virtue:

> Some outcry, some exclamation (she could not afterwards re-

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member what it was), woke her. Before she knew what she was doing she was in the next room, trying to waken the man who lay so rigidly in her bed, who, if she could awaken him, would be Justin, her brother Justin. "Oh, poor Justin, my poor Justin!" Throwing herself on the bed, she clasped him in her arms, lifted his head to lie against her breast, kissed his chattering lips. "There, there!" She felt him relax, waken, drag her towards him. They rushed into the escape of love like winter-starved cattle rushing into a spring pasture.

When light came into the room, they drew a little apart and looked at each other.

"Now we've done it," he said; and hearing the new note in his voice she replied, "A good thing, don't you think?"

Such resourcefulness is beyond wisdom.

As Miss Warner dryly demonstrates, fiction is not an art of fixed positions, preordained relations, terminal aphorisms, fatality; it eludes indignation and compassion, those white flags of the mind. Mrs. Lessing, the guilty oppressor, is compassionate toward her hopeless natives, historical basket cases; and all of her intelligence cannot modify the hopelessness which is her way of seeing them. Xavier Domingo, on the other hand, shudders with indignation while his protagonist spends twenty-four hours under the guns and clubs of the Paris police suppressing an Algerian street rally:

I stood up and everything I saw filled my heart with boredom: it was drizzling and the droplets and mist on the street and the sidewalk diluted those great rose-colored pools of blood the people kept walking through and getting red stains on their feet that left greasy splotches all along the sidewalk and everything was the color of rose-gray mud and had the sour sharp smell of boiled cabbage. I turned around and saw a whole line of wounded Arabs at my side and the man next to me was complaining softly, he touched his split lip with his fingertips, his face was green like a boiled cabbage, it was covered with mud and dried blood and he was trembling with his eyes closed. He had lost one shoe and his naked foot was twitching with cramps, it was nothing but a live nerve.

"Ah—ah—ah—ah" he said without stopping.

The Dreams of Reason (Goya's "The dreams of reason engender monsters") is awash with murky unpunctuated fantasies, obscene and blasphemous, presumably to illustrate the complication, mysteriousness, and magnitude of the hero's suffering. Still, his (and the author's) most conspicuous feeling is that degree of baffled rage and self-pity which can always turn up a scapegoat for history's refusal to be decent—in this case, the Parisian man on the street, who while history goes about its business keeps tending to his own:

The man with the long neck, alone as usual, is religious in his

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attendance at the Midi-Minuit, where they are showing a sex-and-horror film all week.

The man with the long neck counts one by one the whip-lashes that fall on the impeccable buttocks of that Nordic blonde and calculates the exact length of the vampire's teeth as they approach the lamb's jugular.

The man with the long neck worships necks in technicolor and he experiences a profound ecstasy when a vampire drinks their blood.

The man with the long neck has a guardian vampire who is his only companion. He hears the vampire breathing counsels of spiritual perfection into his ear.

The man with the long neck is not in doubt for a second longer. He unbuttons his fly and masturbates until the screen announces:

THE END

But the Midi-Minuit, or 42nd Street, is not the cause or the end of history. *The Dreams of Reason* is a temperance tract, a wall not a window.

It is also a black comedy, like Alan Harrington's *The Secret Swinger*. Mr. Harrington's first novel, published over a decade ago, was *The Revelations of Dr. Modesto,* about a dim young man who, having almost achieved power, money, and women by following the advice of Dr. Modesto's pamphlet ("We'll form a massive nothing in the heart of the United States of America, and operate from there"), finds out in the last scene of the book that the hortatory "doctor" is an inmate of an asylum. The world, you see, is loony, and only a lunatic's counsels can cope with it.

The Secret Swinger is about a dim aging man, afraid of death and futilely in pursuit of a huge sexy woman who puts out for everybody but him. Mr. Harrington has recurrent bad dreams: in his first novel he presented a similar outsize alluring mammal; but in his second he makes big Gretchen the focus of a really smash ending. The hero, obsessed by his fear of death and by the woman who may be life to him if he can only have her, uses his head at last to conquer both Gretchen and a kind of immortality:

In the apartment an elderly man knelt between two stretchers. He took off his stethoscope and painfully got to his feet. Decades before, his face had begun to sag with patience and weariness. Making a sign to the attendants, he walked to where the pale young man was standing by the window.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't watch any more," confessed the intern in a trembling voice. "I've never seen anything like that."

"You're not likely to," his older colleague said.

"Lord! It looked as if he was trying to get born again. . . ."

The old doctor said: "He went about it the wrong way."

Well, anything for a laugh; and the wilder the gimmick, the less at-

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tention the reader is likely to pay to sloppy journalese, zero-type characters, decrepit situations, immemorially dingy fixed ideas, and a catatonic resistance to human possibility.

The Wig doesn't end with a gimmick, it begins with one: the authentic hair-straightener "Silky Smooth Hair Relaxer, with the Built-in Sweat-proof Base," guaranteed to convert black into a reasonable facsimile of white from the hairline up. Mr. Wright's advantage over Mr. Harrington is that he doesn't take his gimmick seriously, except as the pretext for a sequence of comic adventures; and his advantage over Mrs. Lessing and Sr. Domingo is that, writing from an inside knowledge of the indignities of color, he can afford to be less solemn and less categorical than they, easier even when he is not much amused:

> Six foot five, two hundred and seventy pounds, the exact color of an off-color Irishman, my father had learned to read and write extremely well at the age of thirty-six. He died while printing the letter Z for me. I was ten, and could offer my mother little comfort. I remember she sprayed the bread black.

There is also a fine ersatz Uncle Tom who occupies several pages, a kindly old menial dreaming of revenge and murder in an ascetic purity of hatred. Nevertheless the novel is not, as Mr. Wright intends it to be, a screaming funhouse ride through the life of the Negro in America; for his familiarity with the touchy subject breeds mainly the familiar judgments of it, reproduces the familiar booby-trapped documentation. Regionalism—whether about Harlem or colonial Africa or Algerian workers in Paris—has a propensity for aggressive documentation, local color with built-in sweat-proof point-makers. The rule for the novelist is: If you have a point to make, don't. The regionalist—spectator or insider—is more likely to opt for know-it-all (like the "mystery" or smash-ending writer hoarding his miserable secrets) than make-it-new, he lacks or slights invention, he tells us more than enough to prove what to him was evident before he started.

True, a few hitherto uncollected bits of information turn up now and then. In *The Dark,* a 16-year-old boy in rural Ireland, torn by the need to choose between life out there and the vocation of priesthood, masturbates one hundred and forty times per month. In *A Generous Man,* whose setting is rural North Carolina, a less conscience-stricken boy of the same age achieves, during his second opportunity for intercourse, five orgasms in a half-hour without dismounting:

> Then he did pause in saddle, not from exhaustion—his body had thirstily obeyed each order, having waited nearly as long as she, and still stood and waited; his belly and groin still cradled a lake, tapped but bottomless.

The Dark is of course a post-censorship redoing of *A Portrait of the*

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Artist as a Young Man, Puritan Irish polarization between sensual and saintly stinks, down to the swooning pre-Raphaelite Celtic-twilight rhythms of *A Portrait* and "The Dead":

> A priest on a Saturday night in your own smell in the confession box listening to a month of pleasure and sin and would you be able to stay calm while a girl told about a night in June, fragrance of her perfume mixed with sweat as sweet as roses on the altar, rustle of her taffeta, and the moon above the evergreens outside the windows.

One can imagine Joyce's sardonic blind smile at the compulsive incorrigibilities of Ireland.

Reynolds Price is a far more interesting writer than Mr. McGahern, perhaps in part because comic Faulkner is a better model than early Joyce:

> . . . [Mildred's] old black coat swung open—there was her chest flat under a shrunk-up pink sweater that hugged tight to the hard new belly stuck in her skirt like a coconut shell. Rosacoke asked her, "Mildred, what in the world is that?"
>
> "Nothing but a baby," she said and smiled and shut her coat.
>
> "Whose baby?"
>
> "Well, several have asked me not to say."
>
> "Is it somebody from around here?"
>
> "Bound to be."
>
> "And you haven't tried to throw it?"
>
> "What I want to throw him for, Rosacoke?"
>
> "Won't nobody marry you?"
>
> "Some of them say they studying about it. Ain't no hurry. Just so he come with a name."
>
> "Why on earth did you do it, Mildred?"
>
> "I don't hardly know."
>
> "Well, are you glad?"
>
> "Don't look like *glad* got nothing to do with it. He coming whether I glad or not"—and said goodbye and walked away home.

This is from Mr. Price's first novel, *A Long and Happy Life,* which interpolates amusing and unaffected genre episodes among the standard grandiose sentimentalities about the rural South: the loutish imbecile male as phallic principle ("the ruins he would make and the lives"); the dignified, unrebellious, earthy Negro; the limitlessly affectionate and protective Southern family (as in James Agee's *A Death in the Family*).

A Generous Man is an initiation story about the boy with the bottomless lake in his belly and groin. Ostensibly he is helping to search for his lost brother and an escaped python (named Death!); and many of the early scenes are, again, imagined and sustained by a sharp ear for Southern humor, tall stories, man-talk. But, not satis-

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fied with indulging the boy in Jovian sexual exploits, Mr. Price seems determined to prove that for Southern writers every sex act, as a matter of phallic principle, confirms the superiority of the male, infallibly fertilizes, and must be celebrated in the smuggest and most simplistic agricultural metaphors: "Kate's life refreshed, her dryness watered, Rooster's name prolonged one generation more"; or—

> . . . [she] stood awhile on the bright porch steps . . . not looking either way, not searching, not waiting, as straight and unshaken as if truly healed, unharmed within while fraction by fraction with perfect aim Milo's white seed (his shape, his life) flailed upward against the pull of earth toward her ready womb.

Eventually, the rhetoric is a mildew over everything:

> "I thought you loved your brother," Emma said.
> "*Loved* him?" Milo said—his hands separated like cold steel jaws; the bloody shirt ripped into loud clean halves—"That was my heart tearing in *two*, can't you see?"

Marvin Schiller's territory is the country of the young—young musicians, that is—and Thomas Bontly dramatizes a day in the life of a shoe salesman. Every job, no doubt, has its own mystique and hard-earned know-how, and it doesn't hurt to listen:

> ". . . I imagine a guy could take almost any other disappointment, just so long as he can believe in what he's doing. Now you take Grady—that's why he's so bitter. He doesn't respect his job as a teacher, or as a salesman either. Not like you do. I guess I want to look on my job the way you look on yours, Marty."
> Marty managed a short laugh. "You've got a lot to learn, kid," he said.
> "Yeah?" Andy said. "About the shoe business, you mean, or about life?"
> "What's the difference?" Marty said.
> Andy said, "Yeah, I get it—that's pretty good, Marty. It's a sort of microcosm, isn't it?"
> "A micro-what?" Marty asked.
> Andy laughed. "Oh, that's a medieval concept—it's got to do with religious stuff, heaven and earth and so forth. The sort of thing Grady would sneer at, but it makes sense to me. It really does. . . ."

Mr. Schiller's characters are less colloquial, more lyrically inflammable: "She sat bolt upright, her eyes blazing"; or—

> "David—" Jill began again, and her voice had about it that same tenderness as before—"it's you who don't understand. I don't care what kind of musician you used to be. It's what you are now. I want you to be happy in yourself now."
> "I know, Jill. I know what you want."

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"It's what I said to you in Paris. If you want to be a musician, if you want to quit everything and start all over, you do it!"

"I don't want that."

But she persisted—and I realized that Jill was offering me the one thing I wanted more than anything in the world: the chance to meet life through the one thing that really meant anything to me. It was freedom she was offering me, the freedom to play or not play, to do the thing well, connected to life, play for the sheer necessity of it or for the fun of it, play vigorously, the way Jake did or the way Jill did her acting, for the love of it. And drop my mask of cynic. And drop my role of spoiler of the only good thing I'd ever done. No longer terrified of life. . . .

"David—" she murmured.

The Competitor is "A Maxwell E. Perkins Commemorative Novel"; and Wallace Stegner declares that "I care about Mr. Bontly's shoe salesman, and I admire his book." Mr. Stegner also cares about *Country of the Young,* which he reports that he read "with complete conviction." Mr. Bontly is a Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellow at Stanford, where Mr. Schiller was a student of Mr. Stegner's some years back.

One of the most tedious regionalisms in recent years has been the Jewish novel. *The Beginners* carries a Jewish family from South Africa to Israel and England, touches on Zionism and Afrikaner nationalism, and in general reads like the doctored tape-recorded soap-opera of such midcult anthropology as Oscar Lewis's books on Mexico. *Home Is Where You Start From* concentrates on the tribulations of a family of New York Jews, whose kitchen-table talk has all the vivacity of vegetarian chicken soup:

"You must have a very good job," said Mr. Perlin. His wife handed him a platter heaped with steaming stuffed cabbage, and she, looking briefly at Morrie, seemed to be saying, 'Eat, don't talk so big.'

Morrie would eat, but he was not responsive to her disbelief. "It's not the job so much. I'll have better ones soon. It's the union. We're getting stronger all the time. As soon as we can make some strong demands, we'll be on our way."

"I suppose that's very important these days," Mr. Perlin was apologizing for his wife. "I don't know what I should do about these unions."

Since everyone had helped himself to the stuffed cabbage, Mrs. Perlin once more sat down.

"Not very many people do, so you don't have to feel bad. They will though." Morrie paused to wipe the cabbage juice from his mouth. "Very good stuff, Mrs. Perlin." She nodded her thanks. "The whole thing is if you get in good with the leaders, the organizers, you stand a good chance of really moving up. . . ."

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Many depressing things happen, the mother learns to accept "hating, [which,] if you could stand it, was as much a way to live as loving," every belch is duly registered; and there is a single heart-stopping line of dialogue: "Evelyn, get the horseradish."

For a comparison—as, say, between life and death—here is Ed Wolfe, the phone collection man in Stanley Elkin's story "I Look Out for Ed Wolfe," putting the muscle to a delinquent debtor:

"Mr. Flay? This is Ed Wolfe at Cornucopia Finance." (Can you cope, can you cope? he hummed to himself.)

"Who?"

"Ed Wolfe. I've got an unpleasant duty," he began pleasantly. "You've skipped two payments."

"I didn't skip nothing. I called the girl. She said it was okay."

"That was three months ago. She meant it was all right to miss a few days. Listen, Mr. Flay, we've got that call recorded, too. Nothing gets by."

"I'm a little short."

"Grow."

"I couldn't help it," the man said. Ed Wolfe didn't like the cringing tone. Petulance and anger he could meet with his own petulance, his own anger. But guilt would have to be met with his own guilt, and that, here, was irrelevant.

"Don't con me, Flay. You're a troublemaker. What are you, Flay, a Polish person? Flay isn't a Polish name, but your address. . . ."

"What's that?"

"What are you? Are you Polish?"

"What's that to you? What difference does it make?" That's more like it, Ed Wolfe thought warmly.

"That's what you are, Flay. You're a Pole. It's guys like you who give your race a bad name. Half our bugouts are Polish persons."

"Listen. You can't. . . ."

He began to shout. "*You* listen. You wanted the car. The refrigerator. The chintzy furniture. The sectional you saw in the funny papers. And we paid for it, right?"

"Listen. The money I owe is one thing, the way. . . ."

"We paid for it, right?"

"That doesn't. . . ."

"Right? *Right?*"

"Yes, you. . . ."

"*Okay*. You're in trouble, Warsaw. You're in terrible trouble. It means a lien. A judgment. We've got lawyers. You've got nothing. We'll pull the furniture the hell out of there. The car. Everything."

"Wait," he said. "Listen, my brother-in-law. . . ."

Ed Wolfe broke in sharply. "He's got money?"

"I don't know. A little. I don't know."

"Get it. If you're short, grow. This is America."

"I don't know if he'll let me have it."

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"Steal it. This is America. Good-by."

"Wait a minute. Please."

"That's it. There are other Polish persons on my list. This time it was just a friendly warning. Cornucopia wants its money. Cornucopia. Can you cope? Can you cope? Just a friendly warning, Polish-American. Next time we come with the lawyers and the machine guns. Am I making myself clear?"

Mr. Elkin's characters scrape from their shoes the conditioned reflexes of the world; they bob and weave, join ferociously in dialectic battle with their sluggish fellows. Push the Bully (in "A Poetics for Bullies") describes his methods:

"Did you ever see a match burn twice?" you ask. Strike. Extinguish. Jab his flesh with the hot stub.

"Play 'Gestapo'?"

"How do you play?"

"What's your name?"

"It's Morton."

I slap him. "You're lying."

Morty Perlmutter (in "Perlmutter at the East Pole"), anthropologist and sage, thwarted by an unresponsive Bronx housewife, delivers the opening salvo of "Perlmutter's curse": "May your neighborhood change!" Bertie, the hip musician (in "The Guest"), speculates on world peace:

A seduction for him was to find some girl and talk her into letting him share his drugs with her. Usually it ended in their lying naked in a bed together, both of them serene, absent of all desire and what Bertie called "unclean thoughts."

"You know," he would say to the girl beside him, "I think that if all the world's leaders would take drugs and lie down on the bed naked like this without any unclean thoughts, the cause of world peace would be helped immeasurably. What do you think?"

Eugene Lepransky, the neighborhood nut (in "Cousin Poor Lesley and the Lousy People"), tells the boys about his dream date:

"So we're dancin' along and I give her the nod. How long can a guy dance, you know? We go off in her car, me and her and this other couple. We're in the back seat necking and up in front is the mayor and his girl. Just the four of us. Me and her and the mayor of the City of New York and his date. Necking."

"Eugene, the mayor was there?" Danny asked.

"Sure. Very horny man, the mayor. So later on she tells the chauffeur. . . ."

But the brightness fades. "In 1949 Eugene went after his mother with a knife and they had to take him away." Push the Bully is shamed

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out of his confidence by an intolerably good boy. Ed Wolfe ends up at a Negro nightclub where he tries to sell a Negro girl into slavery. Morty Perlmutter never does learn, from the Bronx housewife or anybody else, the meaning of life:

> An old woman in a dark cloth coat too warm for the day was across from him. She had on black, broken, high-heeled shoes and white bobbysocks, and sat feeding pigeons from a deep paper sack.
>
> "Good morning there, mother," Morty said.
>
> "Good morning there, tramp," the woman said.
>
> Morty sat contentedly, looking from the great complex of department stores to the jerky thrusts of pigeon neck. "I am a traveler from the West who has come a long journey," he said after a while. "Can you tell me the meaning of life?"
>
> She looked up and squinted at him, her squeezed eyes enormous and burning behind her rimless, sun-reflecting glasses.
>
> "I can but I won't," she said.

Nobody will tell Mr. Elkin either, and he is troubled; as he was troubled in his first book, *Boswell,* a rambling and schizophrenic novel in which his black-comedy intentions are realized in one marvelous and terrifying episode, about The Masked Playboy and The Grim Reaper. The author of this Chaucerian allegory, and of a half-dozen of the stories in *Criers and Kibitzers, Kibitzers and Criers,* is already an important American writer; and his doubts are a happy change from dead certainties.

Mr. Vizinczey has no doubts at all; *In Praise of Older Women* has a most unpromising look about it: more horseradish and folk-wisdom, Hungarian style. It was written in Canada by a Hungarian refugee, in a Continental-accented classroom English. It starts out sounding very much like the barely fictionalized autobiography of a minor Casanova; and one irritably anticipates the parade of complacent identical conquests. It dismisses the charms of girls for the commonplace reasons—they tease, but they don't give—and exalts "older women" because they not only give but give with pleasure. Whereupon Mr. Vizinczey strolls unexploded through all these minefields, telling the story of a man who answers to his own satisfaction the Hungarian *mot,* "Is there life before death?" Love and women are so exciting and agreeable to András Vajda that he is ungrudgingly grateful and pays discriminating attention:

> Then we made love, from sunny afternoon late into the darkness. I haven't learned much since those timeless hours: Maya was teaching me everything there was to know. Yet "teaching" is the wrong word: she was simply pleasing herself and me, and I was unaware of losing my ignorance while discovering the ways of her strange territories. She delighted in every motion—or in just touching my bones and flesh. Maya wasn't one of those women who depend on

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> orgasm as their sole reward for a tiresome business: making love with her was a union, and not the inward masturbation of two strangers in the same bed.
>
> "Watch me now," she warned me before she came, "you'll enjoy it."

András's life is not an easy one, either with the women he loves or in the track of the juggernaut of history: from World War II, when he serves as a twelve-year-old pimp for American soldiers in Austria, to the Hungarian uprising of 1956, which exiles him first to Italy and then to Canada. As a social historian, Mr. Vizinczey succeeds both in suggesting the dimensions of these public catastrophes and in demonstrating their irrelevance to the hero's life. András is not victimized by his impulses, he knows that though love is larger than history it does not last, and he knows how the twentieth century has come by its bad conscience about it:

> We're too understanding to condemn our actions; we condemn our motives instead. Having freed ourselves from a code of behaviour, we submit to a code of motivation to achieve the sense of shame and anxiety that our elders acquired by less sophisticated means. We rejected their religious morality because it set man against his instincts, weighed him down with a burden of guilt for sins which were in fact the workings of natural laws. Yet we still atone for the creation: we think of ourselves as failures, rather than renounce our belief in the possibility of perfection. We hang onto the hope of eternal love by denying even its temporary validity. It's less painful to think "I'm shallow," "She's self-centred," "We couldn't communicate," "It was all just physical," than to accept the simple fact that love is a passing sensation, for reasons beyond our control and even beyond our personalities. But who can reassure himself with his own rationalizations? No argument can fill the void of a dead feeling—that reminder of the ultimate void, our final inconstancy. We're untrue even to life.

In Praise of Older Women is extraordinary in its modesty and buoyancy, its fearlessness and persistent unemphasized sadness. It comes to the boundaries of life, but only after alert and energetic explorations. It celebrates no myths, and casually cripples a few (such as the myth of that raging red weapon the he-man). It celebrates, in fact, only what it proves by the authority of its disinterestedness. It has no tricks, it doesn't begin with a thesis or end with a gimmick, it doesn't reprint old Hungarian menus or dinner conversations, it doesn't strike a blow for political freedom, it is neither indignant nor compassionate. It is a good novel.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Routes to Proust[1]

"AH, TO BE SURE," SAID MY FRIEND, when I told him (airily) that Mr. George Painter has assembled, in his two-volume biography of Proust, an amazing amount of material on the backgrounds of the great novel—"to be sure, but all that stuff has been known for years, hasn't it?"

It was a wonderfully Proustian reaction, especially as he hadn't read the book; and in a sense it's even correct. Proustians who care *have* known for years that the original of Charles Swann was Charles Haas, that Laure Hayman had some part in making Odette, Montesquiou in making Charlus, and a handsome young chauffeur of Proust's, Alfred Agostinelli, in making the delectably equivocal figure of Albertine. These large, loose things have been known for years. But "all that stuff"—no, to be perfectly frank, I hadn't known all of it, nor even the half of it, until Mr. Painter's meticulous and detailed researches dug it up and laid it before me. As contemporary archaeology, the book is dramatic and picturesque; and its tendency, if we can rise above the temptation to substitute non-literary for literary perspectives on the novel, will be to make us better readers of Proust—more alert, more interested, more aware of the cross-currents. Mr. Painter on Proust belongs with Mr. Ellmann on Joyce as a top-flight study of profound poetic imagination dealing with an immense range of social materials—layered, nuanced, cadenced, and (if we approach it gradually, with our faculties awake) enormously revelatory.

If there were any tendency on Mr. Painter's part to tell us that now, in the biography, we are in possession of the "real" Marcel Proust, there would be ample reason for jealous critical disquiet. But for him, as for us, the real Proust is a permanent set of black symbols on white paper between the boards of a bound volume, and the tragic, erratic career of the man who wrote them is of interest primarily as it leads toward this literary artifact. The first tome of the biography,[2] breaking off at the crucial death of Mme. Proust, laid down many of the factual foundations of the vision; the second, while continuing to add fascinating details, concentrates primarily on the immense process of germination, development, and shaping, by which the vision took form and became suffused with meaning. I am not prepared to say that Mr. Painter has been invariably and completely

1 PROUST, THE LATER YEARS, by *George D. Painter*. Little, Brown. $7.50. MARCEL PROUST, THE FICTIONS OF LIFE AND OF ART, by *Leo Bersani*. Oxford. $6.50. MARCEL PROUST, A GUIDE TO THE MAIN RECURRENT THEMES, by *Raymond T. Riva*. Exposition Press. $6.00.

2 *Proust, the Early Years* (Little, Brown, 1959).

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successful in this delicate, difficult task; there are moments when he is reduced to telling us that a section of 100 pages was swollen over a period of time into one of 350 pages; arithmetically, no doubt, he's right, but imaginatively there ought to be something else to say. On the other hand, he has had fewer than a thousand pages to tell his immensely complicated story from beginning to end; and the mere matters of preserving proportion and maintaining impetus would necessarily preclude extended studies in the proof sheets and rough drafts—or the more delicate psychic overtones. Our knowing (here) the general process of the novel's growth is clearly no impediment to our studying (later) its specific patterns—quite the contrary. Critics can go to work all the more freely on the thematic exfoliations now that they have a first definition of the biographical trunk. And it needn't particularly perturb the process that Proust, all his life long, distinguished public events from their private meanings to him—so that in effect there is no "solid core of fact" behind the book. There is a hazy core of fact suffused with the reactions of Proust's aggressive-deprecatory anxiety; and the story of this deep-rooted, infolding, omnivorous consciousness is the story Mr. Painter has chosen to tell.

What emerges in the broad is no startlingly new Proust; the outlines remain pretty much as before. Anyone who recalls the moment of Mlle. Vinteuil encouraging her Lesbian friend to defile the photograph of her father will not be surprised that Proust played similar tricks with the family photographs in the male brothels of which he was part owner. The anxieties of jealous passion which haunt Swann and the narrator are shown to parallel a series of similar experiences with young men, young ladies and young ambiguities; the recurrent asthmatic crises are duly related to moments of acute psychic stress; the pattern of withdrawal and inversion, the frantic quest for relief from the eroding current of time, all are here; but in clearer outline and more incisive detail, with a greater wealth of illustrative incident, than ever before. Mr. Painter's Freudian psychology remains admirably free from jargon and special pleading; when it seems to explain a circumstance, he picks it up, when it does not, he leaves it alone. Our biographer eschews, also, the cheap effect and the overwritten scene; his prose is fluent and good to read, his bristling apparatus modestly buried at the back of the book. One sort of severe taste will complain of too many society anecdotes—but, on the other hand, they make pretty good reading-aloud-to-one's-wife; another sort of taste will complain that there are pages where the reader is expected to have all eight volumes of *A la recherche du temps perdu,* cross-catalogued and indexed, at his command. But a sensible reader will reflect that in a task of these dimensions and this multiplicity, there's really no such thing as a middle way. Proust wouldn't be Proust without some brittle cocktail chatter to leaven the metaphysics, nor without a contrast between the intricate architecture of his novel

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and the mundane details which enter into it. Mr. Painter takes now the high road of textual analysis, now the low road of gossip and chitchat; and it does not seem to me that any sensible reader can emerge from the biography with his sense of the novel diminished. This is something of an achievement for a literary biographer, especially one who must chronicle the *via dolorosa* of a bundle of twitching symptoms like Marcel Proust.

At the risk of alienating forever half my remaining friends, I fear it has to be said that literary biography is a second-rate art of which we have had, lately, some first-rate practitioners. It is an art (this phrase implies) calling for the gift of sympathetic judgment but little critical profundity or originality; for a great command of factual data but little power of historical generalization; for an ability to sift, condense, and balance, but not necessarily to construct. None of this is to say that we shouldn't have literary biographies; only that they are committed, by the nature of their diverse obligations, to compromise; and compromise is not (to put it very mildly indeed) invariably the best road toward a comprehension of literature. And here, by a happy happenstance, is a new book by Mr. Leo Bersani, *Marcel Proust, the Fictions of Life and of Art,* which seems designed to make the point good. The book is devoted explicitly to exploring that haze which never failed to lie between Marcel Proust and the "outside world"—a diaphanous mist compounded of doubts, needs, projections, memories, analogies, desires, terrors, jealousies, misgivings—from which the created world of the fiction draws its peculiar reverberations, and by which it is ordered, and given meaning. Like Proust himself, Mr. Bersani proceeds through a series of linked aphorisms and deductions which give one a sense of marching down a straight gravel walk toward a trim eighteenth-century summary of The Whole Duty of Man. But things aren't as direct as all that, naturally, and the argument flares out into special studies of erotic captivation, social fascination, and imaginative reconquest. Mr. Bersani's critical unit is most likely to be a couple of sentences from which he can develop, working perceptively and patiently, a psychic mechanism of considerable proportions and wide applications. As an analyst of literature, he is under many apparent obligations to Poulet, Starobinski, Bachelard, and J.-P. Richard; what he writes is in effect "psychocritique," but his categories are less abstract, and his readiness to account for specific literary effects is somewhat greater than among the high priests of the school. Because of his special position, it is a bit surprising that he makes no use of René Girard's *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque,* which would lend support and depth to many of his insights. But it is clearly with Girard (and, in English, Hillis Miller) that he belongs, on the right wing of the "psychocritique" school.

Now the fact that he isn't pressing a far-out interpretation of

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Proust—that he isn't, at bottom, any more radical than Mr. Painter himself—highlights a point about Mr. Bersani and the genre of his book. The nature of his study, its self-definition, make it translucent and immediately applicable to Proust's novel; while Mr. Painter's biography, do what it will to disclaim the role, has a solidity which casts it in the role of a substitute for the novel, perhaps even a rival to it. In all sorts of ways, Painter's is the more impressive achievement; but I think one could read it through without being in any way qualified to undertake Proust's novel, while the same thing could not possibly be said about Bersani's book. This is not a matter of the relative merits of the two authors, but of the focus of their two studies. Proustians who have a spacious allotment of time at their disposal are counselled to read both books, Painter at a little psychic distance from the great novel, Bersani right up close to it. On the shelf, Bersani had better stand between the other two.

Feeling a little uneasy and jealous about Mr. Painter's biography—as I did, instinctively, and as a great many people seem to have done—gives one to reflect momentarily on the great novel itself, and its status in the English-speaking world. More than fifty years have passed since Proust's very first volume ventured hesitantly forth (1913), on the eve of the first world war, and twenty-five years since the great Scott-Moncrieff translation appeared in the first stages of the second (1941). No one who inspects the shelves of a research library can remain in doubt that Proust has been accepted as a contemporary classic; the bulk of exegesis and critical commentary, in English as well as French, has become truly formidable. Within the past three years—to look no further back—we have had books by Roger Shattuck and Wallace Fowlie, studies by Howard Moss, B. G. Rogers, M. Mein, B. Lowery, and M. Hindus, as well as René Girard's collection of critical essays—not to mention the swirling riptide of publications from France. In an age of fierce mortality among titles, the full novel continues in print, both as seven separate volumes in the Modern Library and as two boxed volumes (the standard edition in French is of course the three-volume Pléiade set); and if *Swann's Way* is more read, by approximately a hundred to one, than *The Sweet Cheat Gone* (*Albertine Disparue*), who will say that the disparity is not appropriate and natural? Proust rides high, then; he is a classic and (in due measure) a *read* classic. And yet, and yet. . . . It is hard to put one's finger on the "yet," and one risks seeming a gratuitous carper. But, accepting this risk, it seems to me that a certain thinness, sameness, and privacy are perceptible in the critical commentary on Proust. The topics are well-worn, an immense amount of the commentary is repetitious, and the criticism is not opening up, not growing outward. Specialists apart, Proust's most outspoken admirers in England and America have not been the critically advanced or inventive (so far as that constitutes a recognizable group), but the

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arrière-garde, the people whom I would characterize as neo-Trollopians. Perhaps as a result, though there is a great deal of work being done on Proust, it is somehow isolated and limited, it doesn't give one the sense of relating in a working way to anything else in the contemporary world of letters. Flaubert, Stendhal, and Baudelaire, for instance, radiate their influence all over the place; observations about their sensibilities or techniques have the widest sort of application, to the most unlikely authors. One finds them continually involved in discussions which deal primarily with remote figures—they are used as critical benchmarks, so to speak. Proustians, to about the same degree as Jamesians, seem to develop a vocabulary of their own, which is perfectly suited to deal with the sorts of problems it's designed to deal with (for Proust, time, snobbery, jealousy, inversion, redemption through unconscious memory), and irrelevant to a great deal else. As it becomes increasingly great and complex, the great novel thus becomes increasingly chill and remote, increasingly *sui generis.* Perhaps this is why Mr. Painter's biography of Proust has stirred trepidations such as never made themselves felt a few years ago when Richard Ellmann published an equally solid and imposing biography of Joyce. No biographer will ever obscure the impact of *Ulysses* and the *Wake;* Proust is effaceable.

He is read passionately by the professionals and the thesis-writers; one seventh of him is often read in college courses dealing with The Novel; he is read as a whole by isolated enthusiasts and devoted amateurs, such as every novelist dreams of having in his entourage. (These are surely the best readers of all, and if a writer has these, perhaps it does not really matter if he has any others.) The "little band" continues to exist; it picks up recruits from time to time, and the two books under review seem likely to augment the flow of recruits. But in the marketplace of literary ideas (I'm not talking commerce but shop), amid the ongoing business of critical valuation and revaluation, in the open-ended symposium of styles and standards and tastes, how full-bloodedly does Marcel Proust exist? Probably not very, would be my guess; but this may be just because it's quite a while since I listened in on a rousing, catch-as-catch-can discussion of Proust. Has anyone been engaged in such an exercise lately?

A last note, of comic relief. Raymond T. Riva has produced, in conspiracy with Exposition-University Press, a book titled *Marcel Proust, a Guide to the Main Recurrent Themes* which can only be described as ludicrous. Under the rubrics of Time, Memory, Multiplicity of Ego, Will, Love & Jealousy, Snobs, Death, Reality, Search for a Vocation, and Miscellaneous Themes, Mr. Riva tries to say something about Proust and his technique. Though he tries very hard and very long, his path can be seen, from the very first page, as inevitably disastrous. Among his primary handicaps may be specified a primitive literary sensibility, an obtuse intellect, and a prose unstyle surpass-

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ingly mucky and oleaginous. I have taught freshmen in my time who wrote sentences like the following:

> Let us examine Proust's apparent expansion of reality to his own purposes: as a heightening of reality in a work of art; and as he seems to be telling us, a demonstration of the manner by which our own lives may approach art (p. 160);

or, across the page,

> Thus the present may create a momentary subjective reality so intense as to overpower and erase the reality of the present (p. 161).

But the freshmen flunked the course in which they were enrolled, while Mr. Riva (thanks to the University of Illinois, which should hang its collective head) is a Doctor of Philosophy, and need never take an elementary course in English prose composition again. As an attempt to explore or explain or make available the imaginative work of Marcel Proust, the book is beneath contempt. With a touch of unexpected poetry, Exposition Press tells us it "fills a much-needed lack in French scholarship," and I guess that about wraps it up.

ROGER SALE

René Wellek's History

IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS, René Wellek has become established as the premier historian of modern literary criticism. Before this, though he always spoke mildly and judiciously, Wellek seemed to have an eager eye out for enemies of his favorite ideas: that criticism needs a coherent philosophical base from which to work, that impressionistic criticism and historical relativism are dangerous, and that extrinsic material is usually irrelevant in the understanding of a given work. But since he began work on his massive *A History of Modern Criticism*,[1] the third and fourth volumes of which are now at hand, Wellek has slowly become convinced that he is really unopposed, and so he has ascended to a height from which he is able to view contemporary criticism as though it were ancient scroll work and still receive increased adulation rather than scorn as his reward. He calls Earl Wasserman's books "turgid," he speaks of M. H. Abrams' *The Mirror and*

[1] A HISTORY OF MODERN CRITICISM, by *René Wellek*, Vols. III and IV. Yale University Press. $8.50 and $10.00.

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the Lamp as a "booklet," he blandly announces that the aims of Northrop Frye's "Polemical Introduction" to *Anatomy of Criticism* are "doomed to failure." It seems that heresy, even when it speaks the truth, can be received in the scholastic establishment with equanimity—when uttered from very high elevations.

Wellek has achieved this eminence almost exclusively by one method: knowing more than anyone else. Blessed with a prose style no one would describe as better than adequate, equipped with a literary sensibility that strikes few as being superior to their own, possessed of an intelligence that reveals no originality and seldom more than judiciousness, he has simply blown competitors from the field with erudition. He is conversant in at least seven modern languages and commands a staggering knowledge of their respective literatures. In the *History,* he quotes in English, provides the originals in the notes, and does almost all his own translating. These notes also contain large bibliographies of their subjects while the text itself ranges over history and literature of the last two centuries without pausing for breath. In the sweeping reviews of modern scholarship now included in *Concepts of Criticism* he handles up to four major authors per page. If anyone can claim to have read everything literary and philosophical written since 1750, Wellek is the man. The *History* was originally announced in four volumes, but four have now appeared and the twentieth century is still untouched; maybe it can be finished in two more. It is a huge mine of a work, ranging almost as widely as anyone could wish yet spending much of its time scrutinizing the major figures. Beside it, Brooks's and Wimsatt's *Short History of Criticism* seems both narrow and narrow-minded, and many more specialized literary histories do not do as well as Wellek in surveying and examining the assumptions of a critic's work. A number of the individual treatments of separate authors are the most sensible these authors have yet received, at least in English. With all this, no one could possibly claim the *History* is a bad book. But it certainly is a very disappointing one. One finishes the fourth volume with the feeling that amidst the great concern to cover and do right by everything, Wellek has not asked the relevant questions about literature and criticism.

There is, first of all, the theoretical inflexibility. Wellek means this to be here, to be sure, but it hurts nonetheless:

> [In England around 1830] the idea of a coherent literary theory disappears almost completely and with it any technique of analyzing literature and any interest in form. The nature of literature is misunderstood.

Readers of the earlier volumes will remember that Wellek takes Dr. Johnson to task for "misunderstanding the nature of literature." We have all been here before: the genius of English literature and criti-

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cism is not congenial to a continental philosopher like Wellek. Wellek thinks the words "coherent" and "consistent" are synonyms, and one need be no Arnoldian to see how much English criticism will be distorted under the weight of *that*. The critics in the generation after 1830 are Carlyle, De Quincey, Hunt, Mill, and Ruskin; only Hunt is well handled while the important ones, Mill and Ruskin, are wrestled into contorted positions and then pronounced inadequate. Mill's early and extravagant "What is Poetry?", written shortly after the crisis, is laid out elaborately and then refuted. But the really interesting literary fact about Mill is his constant mediation between his Benthamite training and his love of Wordsworth, and this is passed over, presumably because it appears to best advantage in *Dissertations and Discussions,* "non-literary" essays that reveal on every page that Mill did not "misunderstand literature." The instance of Ruskin is worse, for Wellek knows Ruskin is a great writer, yet he is also sure he is "the most obsolete and remote of all the Victorian 'sages.'" Ruskin is a scattered and derivative theorist, something hardly worth showing again at this late date; yet Wellek can comment exasperatedly:

> Much of *Modern Painters* does not concern itself with works of art at all, but for long stretches discusses cloud formations, tree shapes, rock surfaces, etc. quite apart from pictures. . . .

As though that were the end of the matter, as though some of these descriptions were not magnificent and did not contain in them a striking "theory" of vision.[2] Wellek can say Ruskin has "little use for Dickens" and ignore the wonderful note on *Hard Times* in *Unto This Last.* He can refer to Ruskin's famous assertion that the great scenes of nature are "all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure," as "naive," as though the passage came not from *Modern Painters* but perhaps from *The World as Will and Idea.* Again and again Wellek distorts as he finds "positions" for his authors and attempts to hold them in some timeless solution, as he shakes his head at the refusal of the English to know what they were doing.

But the objection must be made more deeply. Wellek is opposed to treating his subjects biographically, and, given the limitations of space and the usual irrelevance of such biographical work, the choice is perhaps wise. But, beyond this, he seems not even to conceive of them as men that were or writers that are. That these critics ever struggled with the world, that the mind may grasp fitfully yet wonderfully, that understanding literature is a precious and difficult occupation, that readers may find these nineteenth-century monsters both exasperating and fascinating—one can look in vain through hundreds of pages without finding more than fitful recognition of

[2] See, for instance, some fine paragraphs on this by Hugh Kenner in "The Experience of the Eye," *The Southern Review* (Autumn, 1965).

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these things. Wellek is a large-minded and sympathetic man, yet there is something fundamentally disrespectful about his habit—it amounts almost to an insistence—of never quoting a writer at length and then discussing the quotation, of almost never going through a piece of writing to locate not only its outlines but its motion and sense of motion, its characteristic twists and turns. Wellek, hunting for theoretical assumptions, quotes only words and phrases and sentences, and often these are gathered from different works written years apart. We are told each critic's preferences in literature, we learn what everyone thought of Goethe or Shakespeare, but seldom do we get a description of the constellation of this taste or the pressures and contradictions at work in a given writer that formed the taste. Quite a few are denigrated as impressionistic with only passing worry given to the question of the excellence or tastelessness of these impressions.

Some day, someone is going to talk about Arnold's touchstones not as though they were carved on Mount Rushmore but as though they were embedded in some of Arnold's most closely argued and carefully considered prose. Wellek, though, is content to rely on the traditional notion that the touchstones are "all in a note of sadness, melancholy, and resignation," categories that hardly fit the passage from Milton and Satan, barely fit Henry IV's expostulation to sleep, and certainly do not fit Chaucer's "O martyr souded in virginitee!" He seems only partly aware that the touchstones are used to enforce Arnold's idea of high seriousness, another idea that deserves more sympathetic attention than Wellek gives it. It has been years since anyone asked if Chaucer is limited the way Arnold says he is, and Wellek should have looked into the matter, remembering the while that one name on most of Arnold's lists of the greatest authors is Molière. But Wellek does not look freshly because he places his authors rather than seeks them out. There is, more generally, a certain complacency in Wellek about his own taste. He says, for instance, that Courbet's paintings "appear to us conventional and mediocre"; that "nowadays" Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge "seem much greater poets than Byron"; that "it is hard to believe Stephen's criticism can be made to speak to our time"; that Robert Buchanan's attack on Rossetti has "arrogant moral pretensions." That these judgments seem extremely near-sighted is not quite as important as the way they show Wellek's refusal to find merit in anything flamboyantly vulgar or solemnly moral, which means, in effect, that Wellek is left with very little genuinely to admire in the nineteenth century.

This brings us to Wellek's whole idea of historical study, but before considering that, we should mention some smaller matters. First, the continental writers tend to be better handled than the English and American, and the reason seems to be that they fall more often into the class of the fully theoretical, like Dilthey and DeSanctis, or the fully untheoretical, like Heine, Flaubert, and Anatole France.

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On both groups Wellek is excellent—on the first because he is very good at laying out a system, on the second (Heine, by the way, called Hugo's *Les Burgraves* "versified sauerkraut") because the absence of theory throws Wellek back on those native sensibilities he so seldom trusts otherwise. Even better, or at least more surprising, are the fine sections on Taine and Pater, with neither of whom Wellek agrees but both of whom he explains delicately and carefully. Finally, it should be added that throughout both volumes he is consistently good on the really minor writers who do not demand elaborate treatment; he can allow himself to say what he finds good about them without worrying about their shortcomings.

But the result *is* an encyclopedia, not a history. At one point Wellek describes Ludvig Uhland's idea of literary history: "Mere description of work according to genres, or explanation of the conditions and influences from which the works arose, or even critical appraisal, is not sufficient." Wellek seems to approve, but does not see he has in fact here described his own method. It is the result, almost certainly, of his need to discredit something he variously calls "historicism" and "historical relativism," which seems to mean anything from genuine historical insight such as that of François Brunetière to belle-lettristic sinking of writer and work into "period." Wellek can speak highly of Brunetière's idea that

> "At all times, in literature as in art, it is the past which presses with heaviest weight upon the present." What is to be established is the inner causality. In literature—after the influence of the individual —"the greatest operating force is that of works on works."

Yet he cannot see that his own volumes have almost no sense of "inner causality" or "the operating force" of "works on works." The nearest he comes to understanding is in a rather pathetic "Postscript" to the fourth volume. "Is it correct to say," he asks, "that we have written a history?" He then, really, gives it all away by showing what he thinks a history would be if it sought to go "beyond the chronological order of exposition." He says he has attended to external influence:

> The change from the idealistic Hegelian atmosphere of the early 19th century to the prevalence of empirical, positivistic, or materialistic allegiances and terminologies is too obvious to be missed. The profound impact of science. . . .

That, for Wellek, is history: an endless flow of *isms* within and across boundaries of countries and disciplines: an eternal fountain of psychologism, organicism, historicism, conceptualism, intellectualism, comparativism; a profound aversion to treating human beings as the unit of historical description and analysis. Finally, for Wellek, history is either "the chronological order of exposition" or "a reflection of the social, political, philosophical or even literary-historical conditions

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of a time." That such a position is terribly impoverished, in fact and probably in theory, let one small instance attempt to show.

In the second volume of the *History* Wellek discusses Shelley and Keats without trying to show that both had considerable critical intelligences. For instance, both knew Wordsworth was a great poet, and both knew that they scorned the Wordsworth still alive in 1818. A nice problem for two brilliant young poets, and they handled it in two documents that, characteristically, Wellek never considers: Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third,* Keats's letter to Reynolds about the Mansion of Many Apartments. Wordsworth had, and decisively, made his own experience the matter of great and long poems, his mind the haunt and main region of his song. Yet the song had died out and the singer had become crabbed. Shelley and Keats were driven to see Wordsworth's life critically as Wordsworth had seen it poetically, *as a story*. Not biographically in any narrow sense, but as the history of a persona, a poetic development and decline:

> He was a mighty poet—and
> A subtle-souled psychologist;
> All things he seemed to understand,
> Of old or new—of sea or land—
> But his own mind—which was a mist.

The tone is of course a little uncertain, both respectful and scornful, but Shelley can honor both feelings by seeing Wordsworth not as a self but as a lifetime. So too Keats, who sees Wordsworth in the dark passages beyond the chamber of Maiden Thoughts, feeling the burden of the mystery, unable to come into new apartments, lost yet grand enough to make him a deeper poet than Milton. One hesitates to tell Wellek that this is the first time in criticism that major emphasis is placed on the poet's career as a means of measuring his achievement and limitation, though as far as I can see Wellek mentions no one doing this before Rudolf Haym in 1856. Yet the emphasis placed by Shelley and Keats is one that is terribly important to us, and it is the major barrier between us and a sympathetic reading of the biographical method of Dr. Johnson—he saw the facts of a life, the character, and the works all in separate compartments; Shelley and Keats saw a career. Theirs is criticism, romantic criticism, a contribution at least as important as all that Coleridgean "organicism."

But in order to see this, one needs an idea of history that is much more responsive to relevance than is Wellek's; one has to see writers not just being "influenced" in some unreal thematic way, but also invented, as Shelley and Keats invented Wordsworth. What these younger men were doing with their master is what Eliot did with LaForgue and Donne, what James did with Hawthorne, George Eliot, and Turgenev. It is what Eliot meant by tradition, what Brunetière meant by history, what Wellek does not see and therefore cannot use to save his book from the reference shelf.

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ANTHONY HECHT

Poetry Chronicle[1]

When Howard Nemerov was Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress he invited a considerable number of poets, of diverse styles and persuasions, to respond to a set of questions he had formulated. The poets who replied were these: Conrad Aiken, Ben Belitt, John Berryman, John Malcolm Brinnin, Gregory Corso, J. V. Cunningham, James Dickey, Robert Duncan, Richard Eberhart, Jack Gilbert, Barbara Howes, Vassar Miller, Marianne Moore, William Jay Smith, May Swenson, Theodore Weiss, Reed Whittemore, and Richard Wilbur. And the questions were as follows:

1. Do you see your work as having essentially changed in character or style since you began?

2. Is there, has there been, was there ever, a "revolution" in poetry, or is all that a matter of a few sleazy technical tricks? What is the relation of your own work to this question, if there is a relation? Otherwise put: do you respond to such notions as The New Poetry, An American Language Distinct from English, The Collapse of Prosody, No Thoughts but in Things, The Battle between Academics and—What?—Others (A Fair Field Full of Mostly Corpses)?

3. Does the question whether the world has changed during this century preoccupy you in poetry? Does your work appear to you to envision the appearance of a new human nature, for better or worse, or does it view the many and obvious changes as essentially technological?

4. What is the proper function of criticism? Is there a species of it that you admire (are able to get along with)?

Well, these are good questions, and Mr. Nemerov is too honorable a man to exact from other poets what he would be unwilling to perform himself, and so he has, quite properly, included his own responses. Some of the poets, to be sure, evaded the questions, or found them not much to the point, and delivered themselves upon whatever themes they found important; but most of them stuck to the format proposed.

In one respect at least the reading of this book is a little disheartening; for however one may rank or regard the poets listed above, it is touching to find that with only one exception (this being Mr. Ne-

1 POETS ON POETRY, by *Howard Nemerov.* Basic Books. $4.95. NIGHTS AND DAYS, by *James Merrill.* Atheneum. $1.95. A JOYFUL NOISE, by *Donald Finkel.* Atheneum. $1.95. WINTER NEWS, by *John Haines.* Wesleyan. $1.85. POEMS, by *Jon Silkin.* Wesleyan. $1.85. WILDTRACK, by *John Wain.* Viking. $3.50. SELECTED POEMS, by *Günter Grass.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $3.95.

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merov himself) they have chosen to adopt a tone of enormous solemnity in discussing their art and poetry in general. This is not to say it is not a serious matter, but rather that in reading through the book for a while one comes to feel that poets take themselves as seriously as they do because almost nobody else does. It is one thing to be a conscious artist; it is another to be self-conscious. And one feels that the fact that poets have no real roles to play in contemporary American society, that they are on the whole a luxury not very much in demand, has worked to encourage this self-consciousness, even when it disguises itself as a bold affirmation of the unconscious. One misses rather too much the briskness of Mr. Nemerov's reply to his own question: "As for An American Language Distinct from English, if people want to write poems in that language, fine. But if they want to argue with you about it and the room hasn't got a door, you listen to what they have to say as patiently as possible and then ask them to say it over in American."

James Merrill is an excellent poet, who has not, it seems to me, gotten anywhere near the praise and recognition he deserves. His very early poems (the volume under review is his fourth) were beautifully executed but somewhat frail, especially in comparison with the work in *Water Street* and *Nights and Days*. Without sacrificing any of their technical skill, his poems have become more openly dramatic, and he manages some weird effects by sometimes deliberately clouding our sense of who precisely the *dramatis personae* are. There are poems in which the "you" being addressed is not quite distinct from the poet; but this calculated uncertainty about pronouns gives an interesting excitement to the poems when it occurs. Inasmuch as Mr. Merrill has also written several plays (as well as two novels), it is not surprising that his poems should have this particular dramatic flavor, which is there even in the most meditative of them. But in the present volume there are two poems that call for particular notice by virtue of their length, scope and ambition. One is called "The Thousand and Second Night," and it is worth noting that the poet has elected to risk a new Byzantine poem, using some of the same oppositions between East and West, life, death, and art that Yeats had made almost his own; and he has done this, astonishingly, without inviting any damaging comparison whatever. The other big poem, equally good, is called "From the Cupola." It is based, in a way, on the Cupid and Psyche myth, but this is merely the frame of a very peculiar poem with several voices. The Psyche here is in some sense a sort of Emily Dickinson-like New England spinster, but she may also be a manifestation of the poet's imagination, as she was for Keats. The poem, read this second way, would then be about the artist's remoteness from his audience. Mr. Merrill, I take it, is one who likes having his little private jokes, and I suspect that in giving the names of Gertrude and Alice to the two jealous sisters of Psyche, he is inviting us to think of them in the per-

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sons of Miss Stein and Miss Toklas. There is, I confess, one detail of the poem that I find rather irritating. Whenever Psyche speaks, it is without punctuation, and while this may be meant to speed things up, its actual effect is to make us slow down intolerably while we puzzle out the syntax and provide our own punctuation marks. I'm not sure what Mr. Merrill feels he has gained by this device, and perhaps it will not annoy other readers.

Donald Finkel is also first rate. And if one were to compare him to any other writer, it would not be to a poet (at least, not a contemporary) but to Saul Bellow. There is in the texture, the tone, the fabric of Finkel's language a wonderful vaudeville of biblical rhythms and majesty richly larded with the colloquial and base vernacular. Had he wanted one, he could have used as an epigraph for his book the drunken song in *Herzog:*

> *Al tastir ponecho mimeni*
> I'm broke without a penny.
> Do not hide Thy countenance from us
> Vich nobody can deny.

It should be noticed that, like Merrill, Finkel also has a "big" poem in this volume. It is called "Three for Robert Rauschenberg," and here is a brief section from it:

> And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham,
> and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.
> And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father:
> and he said, Here am I, my son. And the Angel of the Lord
> called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham:
> and he said, Here am I.
>
> To keep from blinding us,
> the angel Goat has consented to wear a rubber tire.
>
> And Isaac called his eldest son, and said, my son:
> and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And Jacob likewise,
> when he came: Here am I.
>
> For the angel Goat
> has only a single line; but he says it like a trouper.

This, however, is by no means meant to convey Mr. Finkel's only style or idiom. There are poems here that are grandly comic, of course, but many of the funniest, for example, "A Poem and a Prayer to St. Hoffstein," or "The Dyspeptic Florist," are touched with pathos. It had been my plan to reproduce here one or two of what I thought Mr. Finkel's best poems, but I have found it so difficult to make my choices that I shall forgo this pleasure, merely warning the reader that if he has not read *A Joyful Noise,* or Mr. Finkel's earlier book, *Simeon,* he has missed a sure thing. It seems also worth adding that it is greatly

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to the credit of Atheneum that they publish both Mr. Finkel and Mr. Merrill.

Early in *The Structure of Complex Words* William Empson has a passage which runs: "One can also drag the idea of Range into the puzzle about 'thrifty' and 'miserly'; it is clear that the behavior thought proper for a farm laborer might be given a different name when adopted by the squire. But it would only be useful to put this into the definition if you were dealing with a simple and clear-cut society. And then again, there might be much odder uses of the Range idea about misers. Some people think they can recognise misers by their manner or their smell or something, so that any sign of thriftiness in one of these men will then be called Miserly." The passage came back to mind as I was reading through *Winter News,* a first book of poems by John Haines. Mr. Haines lives in Alaska, and his poetry reflects the sternness, the bleakness, the austerity of that landscape. But what brought the Empson to mind was the notion that some critics and readers might characterize his poetry as "spare," an honorific term, while others might say quite simply that it was "flat." Obviously the alternate choices suggest strong and clear views about what poetry is or should be, and, to offer my own view at least, I feel that so far Mr. Haines treads a delicate and perilous line between some artful and very subdued triumphs and outright disaster. It is one thing to adopt in poetry the diction of common speech, but this can be fatal if done at the sacrifice of all the excitements of language. Mr. Haines inclines to write in simple declarative sentences, ruthlessly avoiding ornamentation and fancy rhetoric, and is very frugal indeed with the most ordinary figures of speech.

I found a house in the forest,
small, windowless, and dark.

From the doorway came the close,
suffocating odor of blood
and fur mixed with dung.

I looked inside and saw an injured
bird that filled the room,
fluttering against the walls.

With a stifled croaking
it lunged toward the door
as if held back
by an invisible chain:

the beak was half eaten away,
and its heart beat wildly
under the rumpled feathers.

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I sank to my knees—
a man shown the face of God.

It seems to me that there is much to object to about this (though it must be said in all fairness to Mr. Haines that most of his poems are much better). First of all, merely as observation it fails to convince: if the bird "filled the room, / fluttering against the walls" it was surely much too active for an observer to notice that "its heart beat wildly/ under the rumpled feathers." This is the sort of thing one notices when a terrified bird is standing still, or in one's hand. And if it is fluttering about that way, it is not clear to me, visually, how it can lunge "as if held back/ by an invisible chain." Words like "fluttering" and "wildly" and "rumpled" strike me as flat in their obviousness, and consequently also fail to convince. I find little rationale for the spacing of the lines except perhaps a desire to keep them all about the same length; for, given the beat of the first and third lines, one would expect the sixth line to read, "I looked inside and saw." But the most conspicuous weakness is at the end; and this has nothing at all to do with whether the reader believes in God or not, or feels that it is improper to picture the divinity in this way. The effect here is weak and sentimental and unconvincing because it is merely a flat assertion by the poet, and in no way earned or even explained by the poem. I am worrying this, perhaps a bit tiresomely, not merely because of this poem, but because there seems to have risen a group of American Landscape Poets whose work has sometimes suffered from these same flaws. There are quite a few poems by Thomas Hardy, for instance, which reflect a state of spiritual aridity, or grave doubt concerning the beneficence or even the reality of Providence, and in which he thrusts this doubt and anguish outward upon the landscape or upon some object. A poem like "Nature's Questioning" is one of these that seems to me beautifully to succeed. The landscape is lifeless and appalling, and asks very pointed questions about what it was created for, and by whom; going so far as to ask of the poet (in behalf of a pool, field, flock, and lonely tree) "are we live remains/ of Godhead dying downward, brain and eye now gone?" After these things have asked all their questions, the poet says, "No answerer, I. . . ." But the poem works: it is frightening, pathetic, bold; whereas Mr. Haines's ending is arbitrary and weak and unconvincing. It is of course no disgrace to him that he doesn't yet write as well as Hardy, and it seems only fair to close this brief comment with a poem of his that comes much closer to his kind of success. It is called "Pickers":

All day we were bent over,
lifting handfuls of wind and dust.

Scraps of some human conversation
blew by; a coffin on wheels
rolled slowly backward across

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the field, and the skinned
bodies of the harvest were loaded.

A red cloud boiling up out
of the darkness became the evening.
Sentinels of a shattered army,
we drank bitter coffee, and spoke
of the field, the light, and the cold.

Jon Silkin is an excellent young English poet who has published four volumes over there, and now Wesleyan has brought out his first volume in this country. Since the American book contains selections from his entire corpus, including some new poems that have not appeared in book form before, it is not surprising that Mr. Silkin should appear not merely a skillful poet, but one of considerable range of tone and command of material. I had come across what I took to be representative poems of his in anthologies, but this book, for its breadth and variety, is enormously impressive. It prevents us from labelling him a "nature poet," though many of his most beautiful successes (and I would want to place a new poem, "Brought Up With Grass," among them) stem from a deep concern with and for plants and animals and birds. Some of his themes are familiar to the pastoral tradition: the unsettling fact that man is both a part of nature but painfully cut off from it. And some of his work has that radical vegetal passion that reminds us a bit of Theodore Roethke, though Mr. Silkin has a diction which is quite different, and his own. Again like Roethke, but again in a manner all his own, he is not above being funny:

Many liberals don't just
Make love, they first ask each other
And either is free to decline
What the other wishes;
That is, unmitigated
Possession of the beloved's flesh.
Nothing hasty, nothing unconsidered
Catches the liberal by
The hairs of lust. Nothing. . . .

But standing most strongly against the danger of his being considered a fern-&-worm man is a poem called "Defence," which begins:

She arrived late, with this motto:
'Time used in reconnaissance
Is not time lost'. Useful hint
On how efficient our defences
Would be. Sent from the *Home Office*
On 'Work of some importance'.
And 'The first thing' she said

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'Is that there will be four minutes
Of preparation before
The thing is dropped. You should
Instruct persons to stand
In the centre of what room
They like—for the blast,
Unlike the bombs of the previous war,
Will draw the walls out.
There will be no crushing
Of flesh. Instead
On all sides walls will reveal
The citizen unharmed.' Here a question,
But 'No' she said 'we have
From our *Intelligence*
Absolute assurance
Our capitol is not targeted.'
Total warfare, by arrangement.
And she was sure, when pressed.
'But there will be devastation
As we now suspect, in radius
Of forty-four miles.
The water will be infected;
The light from the thing, astonishing;
Which though surprised by, we should
Not look at; but shelter
Behind some object "to reduce
Damage to the tissue"
From radiation; or shelter
Under brown paper;
Or, if you can—
Sheets soaked in urine. . . .'

John Wain's *Wildtrack* is a single work described by the London *Times,* in a passage of great praise, as verse journalism. It is a longer and a bigger poem than those by Merrill and Finkel cited above, but, I regret to say, it does not succeed as well. Though this is not for want of ambition. The work is somewhat discontinuous in method, though not at all difficult to read, and composed in fairly relaxed verse interspersed with formal lyrics of all sorts, including sonnets, terza rima, a sestina, and so on, as well as little passages of prose, quotations from Boswell and Sir James Frazer. The weakness of the poem is in its language, which even in the lyric passages (often concerned with critical and dramatic situations) remains just as relaxed as in the looser parts of the work. The poem begins with the Russian revolution on the one hand and the rise of American mass production on the other as two ruthlessly dehumanizing forces which came to birth in the modern world at about the same time. I suppose there is some truth

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in this, and yet, as an American, I cannot feel that because I own a car (which does not run very well) I am utterly dehumanized. I was reminded that the same point was made equally easily and, as I thought, cheaply, by a Roumanian novelist some years ago in a book called *The Twenty-fifth Hour*. He saw Western Europe as the single repository of culture crushed between the two machines of Russia and the U.S.A., which were controlled by mindless barbarians. It was a best seller in Europe for some time, and was praised in this country by certain eminent critics. However, Wain's poem is not anti-American, or even anti-Russian, but concerned with the difficulty of "Choosing/to be human" at a time when so many easier alternatives are available. It is an important topic, but the language fails him. Occasionally he sounds thinly like Auden's verse of the thirties, but not often enough, and throughout there is a plain lack of energy not entirely obscured by flat and provocative pronouncements like:

> Mozart and Fragonard ignore
> the breath of the gin-sleeping whore.
>
> Gulliver never travelled where
> the London sewers stun the air.

as if the eighteenth century had never produced a Hogarth, a Defoe, a Gay. But the clearest way to indicate the general limpness that damages the poem as a whole is to quote a representative passage:

> . . . . Old Russia
> is dead. Old Russian ways
> are dead and here come
> the Twelve leaning against the wind
> stumping in the snow
> one lags behind
> thinking of Katya
> a dead piece of free-market
> luxury with a sweet birthmark
> on her shoulder but never mind
> the dog's tail is well down
> Old Russia must die BAM
> BAM
>
> Alexander Blok with his face pressed to the pane
> saw twelve snowflakes fall that can never fall again
>
> Clumsy cracked boots stamped through the spiralling snow
> the Twelve were marching the way they had to go
>
> their history was already written, they had no choice
> only the dog howled, only the old woman's voice

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came to Alexander Blok's ear as he gazed down
from his unsleeping window and saw the town

the streets and the markets the canals and the faces
upturned to the pitiless snowstorm that left no traces

of the beggar's spittle or the bourgeois' terrified eyes
or the Kerenkas wedged in the warmth of Katya's thighs

Speak to me tense poet from your visionary gloom
say why you leave your chair and pace about your room

confess Alexander Blok confess what you see
as the twelve march straight ahead singing softly
. . . . . .
you who see Jesus Christ at the head of the Twelve
is it the wounds of humanity he comes to salve

or is it not rather a new furnace he prepares
for the flesh that only in death lays down its cares

Günter Grass seems to me an excellent poet, and it is good to have this bilingual volume of his selected poems. He deals with fantasy, irony, humor, and of his predecessors seems most to resemble Erich Kästner and Bertolt Brecht, though his irony is less savage and crude than Brecht's. The translations, by Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton, should not have been remarkably difficult to do, for Grass writes in a rather free form, and none of the poems included here employ rhyme; and on the whole the translators seem pretty well to have succeeded, though there are moments of odd awkwardness. For example, "unsichtbar zu sein" is rendered as "being invisible" instead of "in order to be invisible" or something of that sort.

Seht meine Flöte und mein weisses Hemd,
seht die Giraffe die über den Zaun späht,
das is mein Blut, welches Zuhört

is turned into

Look at my flute and my white shift,
Look at the giraffe peering over the fence,
those are my blood, which is listening

in which it would have been more reasonable to substitute "they" for "those." And there are one or two other places where the English is less clear than the German. Even so, Grass is a pleasure to read, even in translation.

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SIGURD BURCKHARDT

German Made Easy

By his own metaphor, Erich Heller is a philologist:

> Defeated in two wars, Germany appears to have invaded vast terteritories of the world's mind. . . . The "Modern Mind" speaks German, not always good German but fluent German nonetheless. . . . *Man spricht deutsch.* It is all part of a story told by Nietzsche.

Heller has made it his particular task and distinction—in *The Disinherited Mind,* in *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German,* and again in this new book of essays[1]—to explain the history of this language. He himself speaks it with Austrian elegance and ease; though the story is gloomy, his telling of it is masterfully urbane. Perhaps because I am a Prussian, there are moments of reading him when I find myself murmuring: "The situation is hopeless but not serious." But then, we have no lack of grim solemnity; it is a pleasant change to hear the paradigms of decline so gracefully conjugated.

Heller describes himself, unfairly, as a hedgehog—as knowing one big thing. He does, but it is a supple knowledge. He knows that the modern mind is disinherited; that it has lost faith in the moral and rational correspondence between the world outside and the world within; and that both worlds have been impoverished by the loss. He reads the history of this mind as a succession of maneuvers, each pushing us farther into insolvency, to find new collateral. It is the maneuvers that absorb him.

More precisely, one series of them—those that look for security in the "interior." For the outward journey—science—he feels only horror mingled with contempt. The untrammelled quest for knowledge —regardless of its value, regardless of its consequences—leads inevitably to the final banality: the Bomb. The sense of liberation and vigor which began with the Renaissance and lasted well into the eighteenth century is, in Heller's scheme, no more than a grand illusion, rather like the false vitality felt by the heroine of Thomas Mann's *The Black Swan* when she mistakes the symptoms of uterine cancer for signs of pregnancy. "Objective" science has damned us by draining damnation of meaning; it dismantled the structure of moral drama within which the choices of Everyman and of the original Dr. Faustus had relevance. The Faust of Lessing and (more ambiguously) of Goethe, saved for the very decision that had damned his sixteenth-century prototype, was bound to turn into Mann's Faust-Leverkühn. Leverkühn must call the devil to be saved from cold abstraction, must sell his mind to syphilis so that his soul may be damned to humanity.

[1] THE ARTIST'S JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR AND OTHER ESSAYS, by *Erich Heller.* Random House. $4.95.

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There is in Heller's attitude toward science something of aristocratic obtuseness. He hardly acknowledges the will to both form and truth which makes science, at its best, so remarkably like art (at *its* best). What he focuses on is the work of rude mechanicals, the machinery of mass production and destruction. But—since he speaks of the banality of the Bomb—is the banality with which our TV-sets bombard us to be charged to Maxwell and Hertz? I should guess that the majority of TV producers and directors, though perfectly able to tell a Braque from a Picasso, were never barbarized by having to solve differential equations.

My excuse for starting on a combative note must be that Heller starts the same way. But like most of us he talks best about what he knows and loves best: art. (The term, of course, includes literature and music.) Here his love seems almost to get the better of his general pessimism; in following the artist's journey into the interior, he chooses Hegel rather than Nietzsche as his guide. For Hegel, art's destiny is triumphant self-annihilation; its history is propelled by the Spirit's will to pure self-realization, pure "inwardness." Under this propulsion, art moves from the "symbolic" (*seeking* perfect embodiment) through the "classical" (*finding* perfect embodiment) to the "romantic" phase of progressive divestment. The art of the Christian West is, as a whole, "romantic," engaged in the effort so to employ matter (to which, of course, it remains bound) as to overcome materiality. Once it has reached this goal, it ceases, at least as "positive" art. The Spirit, having fully absorbed that knowledge of itself which can only come from the body, is liberated to "find its satisfaction solely within its own in-dwelling as the true abode of truth."

Paradoxical, abstruse, Teutonic—Hegel's aesthetics is all of that. But what matters is not so much what it is as what it does. It enables Heller to see Gothic architecture as "the most astonishing campaign ever conducted by the Spirit against the native heaviness of matter," or Rembrandt's Gold Helmet as "the sunset of things, the shining foil for the retreat announced by the face of the man: the retreat of the Spirit into human subjectivity."

This is unabashedly "romantic" criticism—quite out of fashion, in part because it often has a way of retreating into the pure subjectivity of the critic rather than of the work of art. But Heller has chosen the stations of his journey with perceptive tact. From Rembrandt and *Michelangelo's strange* "Pietà Rondanini" (plates are provided) he moves to *Hamlet* and Rilke's *Duino Elegies.* And if we rebel against his insistent dematerializing of art, his dialectic furnishes him with an answer which is by no means simply specious: the "romantic" artist knows that in art only matter can vanquish matter, that if the Spirit is to be liberated, the body must engender its own negation. "And death once dead, there's no more dying then."

Hamlet is the *locus romanticus.* The heart of the Prince's mystery is not plucked out by learned annotators citing Elizabethan anatomies

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of melancholy; he suffers from that within which passes show. He—not the play or Shakespeare—fails for lack of an objective correlative; what Eliot diagnosed as Shakespeare's inability is in fact Shakespeare's own diagnosis and prognosis of the "romantic" ailment. And since the poet's matter is words, words must be made their own antagonists. Thus we get the soliloquies—the self turned totally inward and even so retching with the irreducible materiality of having to talk to itself: "must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words."

Rilke turns tragedy into triumph. The *Duino Elegies* aim simultaneously at the abstractest, directest form of statement and at dissolution into music: *"Gesang ist Dasein."* They are meant to enact and celebrate the transfiguration of visible, nameable forms into the "invisible," their final passing into the *"Weltinnenraum"* for which they have been longing from the beginning:

> *Wollen, wir sollen sie ganz im unsichtbaren Herzen verwandeln*
> *In—o unendlich in uns! wer wir am Ende auch seien!*

Hearing this, one understands Prospero's anger at having once more to turn his thoughts to "that foul conspiracy/ Of the beast Caliban." The only question (unraised by Heller) is: Is it the poet's job to *help* the Spirit Ariel "find its satisfaction solely in its own in-dwelling"? Don't Prospero's crusty commands summon a poetry truer than the disembodied harmonies of Duino?

This being the end of the Hegelian journey, Heller returns to Nietzsche (who thought German "inwardness" the effect of German cooking and the attendant poor digestion). Few things are easier than mining Nietzsche for brilliant aphorisms and uncanny prophecies; few things are harder than getting to the heart of him. Here Heller is at his best. Nietzsche, German in spite of himself, is the philosopher of the squared negation, "incomprehensible in his contradictions except as the common strategist of two opposing armies who plans for the victory of a mysterious third." This is perfect, the rare kind of perception which leaves the mind in pleased and pregnant assent. Nietzsche is both Mario *and* the Magician, aiming at the destruction of his annihilating intelligence by annihilating an envied pride of wholeness. But the end is not the birth of Superman; it is a grisly inversion of *"Liebestod."* Nevertheless we are held captive by the magic; *"von Zeit zu Zeit wird gezaubert,"* Nietzsche wrote in his last, raving note to "Ariadne." Heller comes as close as an expositor can to showing the secret—the truth—of Nietzsche's spell.

When finally he looks at Wittgenstein, I do not think he is equally well served by his angle of vision. A good deal of Wittgenstein's crabbed substantiality is lost in linking him too closely with Nietzsche. Not that the links are not there; Heller is almost too clever at pointing them up. But I cannot believe that Wittengstein would have accepted a description of his thinking such as this: "Its temperature is of its essence, in its passion lies its seriousness, the rhythm of the

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sentences that express it is as telling as is that which they tell, and sometimes a semicolon marks the frontier between a thought and a triviality. How can this be? Are we speaking of an artist or a philosopher? *We are speaking of Ludwig Wittgenstein.*" Later on, Heller himself finds it necessary to call Wittgenstein "not a poet but a philosopher," and he and we are promptly rewarded for this return to simplicity: "Philosophy enters with Wittgenstein the stage which has been reached by many another creative activity . . . where every act of creation is inseparable from the critique of its medium, and every work, intensely reflecting upon itself, looks like the embodied doubt of its own possibility." This is a beautifully precise translation of "the in-dwelling of the Spirit" into prose; the word is "self-reference."

Heller closes his book by quoting Wittgenstein on the aim of philosophy—"to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle"—and adding: "But who asks? Who answers? And who is the fly? It is an unholy trinity; the three are one. This way lies no way out. This way lie only fly-bottles, and more and more fly-bottles." Perhaps; but Heller seems to enjoy tracing this way rather more than he would have us (or himself) know. Self-reference finally encloses even the dread it inspires; despair learns to flirt with its own reflection. I listen to Heller with pleasure and profit; few men speak "German" so well. But in the end I would be grateful for a hint that there are other languages—cruder possibly, more pragmatic, but with a more concrete vocabulary for the world of the Bomb than "banality." Meta-languages, in their infinite regression, seem to yield only what Hopkins called "carrion comfort." Having taken the journey into the interior, I feel the need of a different kind of speech—something closer to "Mistah Kurtz—he dead."

***Notes on Contributors** (cont.)*

MARY LOUISE WILLEY, a new contributor, was born in New Haven, Connecticut, and grew up there and in Hartford. She has held a variety of teaching, secretarial and library jobs, but has been doing more and more writing during recent years. "The Imprisonment" is her second story to be published. She now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her husband—an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston—and their two children.

SIGURD BURCKHARDT teaches in the Department of Literature at the University of California, San Diego. He is working on Kleist and Shakespeare.

A collection of IRVING HOWE's political writing will be issued this fall by Harcourt, Brace & World, with the title *Steady Work*. His essay in this issue is part of a work in progress on Thomas Hardy.

NEAL J. OSBORN, a new contributor with a special interest in "Burkean analysis," teaches at the California State Polytechnic College, Pomona.

MARY EVANS has lived for eight years in Tokyo, where she has been film and theatre critic for the *Japan Times*.

JACK BEHAR, a new contributor, teaches in the Department of Literature at the University of California, San Diego.

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J. MITCHELL MORSE

"Loosen Your Talktapes"[1]

WHEN ABELARD WAS CONDEMNED by the Council of Soissons to abjure his heresies and profess unstreaked, unspotted, pure blank orthodoxy, he was not allowed to do so in his own words. He was not even allowed to recite the Athanasian Creed, but was required to read it like a catechumen. He tells us in the *Historia Calamitatum* that he got it out as well as he could "amid sobs and tears." Those were real, not metaphorical, sobs and tears. Tears of indignity. The tears of St. Augustine's conversion to Christianity, though of a different kind, were equally real; so were those of Bunyan's conversion, and of Chateaubriand's—"j'ai pleuré, et j'ai cru." Notwithstanding the unreality of *Clarissa Harlowe,* the tears with which the generous Diderot responded to it were as real as those with which Wordsworth responded to certain landscapes; but Shelley's tears begin to be metaphorical, Tennyson's are a mere literary convention, and those that Wilde says flow in a "wide stream" when he reads Euripides don't seem intended to be believed. In our own time, for better and for worse, the springs have pretty much dried up. The soft-hearted Margies who in *Finnegans Wake* "may be met with at the movies swallowing sobs and blowing bixed mixcuits" are comic types; Julie d'Etange and Virginie Tours didn't swallow their sobs or intermit them with cookies; we have no heroines of sensibility now, much less heroes who like Tom Jones could weep manly tears if the occasion deserved them. In *The Trembling of the Veil* Yeats reports a conversation with the Fenian John O'Leary: " 'There are things a man must not do to save a nation,' he once told me, and when I asked what things, he said, 'To cry in public,' and I think it probable that he would have added, if pressed, 'To write oratorical or insincere verse.' " Much of Yeats's own verse was oratorical, all expressed deep feeling, and all, however wrongheaded, was sincere: literarily as well as emotionally sincere; even so, at least this once he seems to have associated the open expression of deep feeling with charlatanism, and even perhaps to have questioned the possibility of its being sincere.

If we are really hip we don't laugh out loud either; and of course we keep our convictions, if any, to ourselves. We don't commit the bad taste of committing ourselves, emotionally or intellectually. We are nothing if not aware of complexities, difficulties, absurdities, ambivalences and extenuations; we accept and forgive everything because we don't presume to understand anything. We are unreservedly reserved.

Or we were. The winter of our disaffiliation seems to be over. As my son said some years ago, in his college days, "The beats were a

[1] YOU DON'T SAY: STUDIES OF MODERN AMERICAN INHIBITIONS, by *Benjamin DeMott.* Harcourt, Brace & World. $4.50.

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phenomenon of the Eisenhower administration"; that was during the Eisenhower administration, but he put it in the past tense; and all the right-wing commentators notwithstanding, the students who now work for civil rights and protest against the horrors of Vietnam are as strongly concerned with the moral issues of our time as the beats were weakly unconcerned. They are as optimistic as the beats were pessimistic, for they believe in the efficacy of thought and action. But of course the flow of history is not cut across by transverse lines at which one period ends and the next begins; there were a few activists during the Eisenhower administration, and there are still a great many inactivists, some whose inner conflicts paralyze them, some who are supinely cynical, and some who simply lack mental energy.

So that DeMott's subtitle, "Studies of Modern American Inhibitions," covering essays published from 1960 through 1965, is still valid. The words we don't say, the gestures we don't make, the acts we refrain from, the commitments and involvements we avoid, the responsibilities we disavow, the lights we refuse to turn on, the personal growth we inhibit: in these we all share the nature of the little self-made monster Oskar Matzerath and the even viler Bardamu. But our nature includes other, more generous, more humane, more courageous elements, and in the name of these DeMott opposes the purism that considers politics in terms of technique to the exclusion of ideas, the historicism that condones bad behavior or bad writing or bad anything by relating it to its context, the perspectivism that discounts every decent utterance for personal bias, and the liberal conservatism or conservative liberalism that wants the victims of the white-trash culture to be satisfied with "reasonable" restraints on those who violate their rights, destroy their property, and murder them.

DeMott's first three essays deal with expressions of pop culture: girlie magazines, comic greeting cards, and parachute-jumping clubs. He states the theme of the whole book in the very first, "The Anatomy of *Playboy*." The recent difficulties and failures of mass magazines are not hard to explain: in reaching for the bottom and still assuming readers who can read, they suffer a schizothymia that puts them at a hopeless disadvantage vis-à-vis TV. But many people who don't read for the pleasure of reading can read if they want to, and they want to if it intensifies the pleasure of looking at sexy pictures. DeMott accounts for the girlie magazines' "success in a declining medium" by showing how they cater to a special audience the home screen cannot cater to: their editors, he says, "offer a vision of the whole man reduced to his private parts." By serving fantasies to this homunculus, by offering him "paper playmates," *Playboy* and its imitators encourage his reduction; they transport him to "a societyless world" in which nothing but sexual need exists, in which other human needs, desires, purposes and values "are neither attacked nor mocked but simply 'treated' as non-existent." Thus these magazines reflect and encourage an emerging "kitsch existentialism," a thoughtless dis-

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carding of all humane values, not out of conviction or hostility or even distaste, but merely out of slackness. And the "upper culture," says DeMott, is helpless to condemn or even to criticize this tendency, because it has itself discredited the vocabulary in which alone such condemnation or criticism is possible: "the vocabulary of flat moral counters, which fineness scorns." We cultured jerks, with our fine awareness of the grid of circumstance, can't quite bring ourselves to say that *Playboy* is cheap. DeMott does say it. He says *Playboy* stinks. He is free of our "intense linguistic inhibition (about all plain terms save obscenities)."

This essay probes somewhat deeper than Orwell's "Raffles and Miss Blandish"; and "The Passionate Mutes," which contrasts the sen-sen sentimentality of the old greeting cards with the ironic and sometimes sick wiseguy humor of the new ones, probes deeper than Orwell's "The Art of Donald McGill." It illustrates a point made in the foreword: "The language of unselfish commitment was raided and degraded long ago by PR types, copy writers, image builders—men who make slugs out of every term they touch. And it is therefore quite possible that students who object to that language do so in order to assert their moral dignity and intelligence." But the inhibition seems to me to reflect something more serious than a distaste for PR and advertising. DeMott quotes against the fear of sentimentality G. K. Chesterton, who was not a public relations type or an adman but a religious bigot, a racist, and an ever so gentle and whimsical and sentimental opponent of things like public education and workmen's compensation. Sentimentality is part of the stock in trade of *The National Observer,* and "ideals" is a word much favored by Birchite orators. Lieutenant Henry learned in war to distrust words like "honor" and "glory," and Thomas Mann's *Enttäuschter* before him regretted having grown up in an atmosphere of pulpit rhetoric full of "big words" such as "good" and "evil." It isn't so much that they are the common coin of admen as that they are the deadly weapons of Ku Kluxers.

Hence what DeMott calls "the fashionable enthusiasm for silence as a supreme human value." But silence can also be used by white trash. Thinking of the silence of Flem Snopes, I agree with DeMott that the fashionable enthusiasm is mistaken. Some years ago I saw a movie short, "The Sound of Speed," produced by and starring Lance von Reventlow, gentleman racing driver. He drove a custom-built car over his own private course, competing only against himself in the mystical pursuit of speed, and throughout the fifteen or twenty minutes the film lasted the only sound was that of his engine. He did not talk to his mechanics, or they to him. When one of them silently pointed out that the speedometer was broken, Von Reventlow shrugged in a manner expressing bottomless contempt for all gadgets, instruments, machines, devices, figures, concepts, arts and sciences. He had used a product of science to express mere mindless instinct, and had broken it. Never was there a more consummately

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aristocratic gesture. The parachute jumpers DeMott describes in "Suspended Youth" are much like Von Reventlow. DeMott argues, "In the wordless clouds no problem is solved"; but of course they are trying not to solve but to escape their problems—or, like Von Reventlow and Flem Snopes, to stare them down.

In "Dirty Words?" DeMott discusses the anti-verbalism of such mid-cult novelists as J. D. Salinger and Iris Murdoch; in "Party Apolitics" he describes the linguistics of practical politics in Massachusetts, and in "Pure Politics" he faults a number of contemporary historians and political scientists for equating practical convention politics with statesmanship. In "America Absolved," a review of Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in America,* he contests Hofstadter's "reassertion of connections between mind-baiting and democratic aspiration," and asks: "But what of the last two decades? Why does the learned professor not deal directly with Hiss-Chambers or with the McCarthy years? If he had focused on these episodes would he have found it possible to establish a relation between anti-intellectualism and 'humane and democratic sentiments'? . . . Isn't it a fact that the professor makes his case by avoiding the grittiest episodes in memory —outbursts that did incomparably more damage to 'intellectual culture' than any he cites?"

In "Project for Another Country" he discusses three approaches to the white-trash problem—Martin Luther King's call for "Federal commitment, full, unequivocal, and unremitting," Nicholas Katzenbach's hope that the white trash will "voluntarily conform to otherwise unenforceable laws," and James Baldwin's warning that if the West is "to survive as a human, moving, moral weight in the world America and all the Western nations will be forced to . . . discard nearly all the assumptions that have been used to justify their lives and their anguish and their crimes so long." Against the background of a Domestic Peace Corps project in Harlem, DeMott finds that of these three voices "it is the last, the voice of Mr. Baldwin, that alone *makes pain matter.*"

The other essays illustrate and develop these themes in terms of the career of Lee Oswald, the attitudes of native writers in the former colonial countries, the indignity of Portuguese life, the condescension of English writers and lecturers toward America, the changing literary style of alumni magazines, the difficulty of helping university students to develop literary judgment when professors, creatures of fashion as many of them are, have no confidence in their own, and the "imperviousness" with which Kenneth Burke and lately Stanley Edgar Hyman avoid making unequivocal moral judgments.

It is good that these essays have been pulled out of the files of magazines and brought together in quite natural unity. They make a very refreshing book: a book that tells us, as one of the earthier characters in *Finnegans Wake* tells us, "Loosen your talktapes." You want ambiguity? That sentence has at least three meanings, and I mean them all.

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JACK BEHAR

Against the Self

MISS SONTAG GIVES US ESSAYS, NOTES, AND APHORISMS on such topics as Happenings, films by Godard, Resnais, and Bresson, the notion of "style" in the analysis of art; a piece *contra* Walter Kaufmann and "religious fellow-travelling"; one on the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss; one on the theory of the novel; the notes on Camp; and throughout propaganda in behalf of the "new sensibility" and what Miss Sontag thinks of, unaccountably to me, as a new aesthetic.[1] Strangely pedantic, confused, or timid about what she would hold to, and never more so than when she produces notes and aphorisms of a fine neatness and futility, Miss Sontag comes through as someone anxious to revise what she takes to be our mistaken view of art. But her cause appears to me less momentous than she seems aware, deriving from a view of art and of persons that belongs to what is by now a quite aged modernism. It is a cause unlikely to enlist readers unacquainted with the strawman philistine—stubbornly holding to the idea of "content" in the arts —who falls regularly before her sentences; and equally those who will find her not radical enough and who are getting by various means direct access to the "eschatology of immanence" that she finds laid out in Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death*. But no matter; it is Miss Sontag herself who proves interesting and important as she utters the incorrigible Blakean demand on an "eschatology of immanence," a celebration of the body, the flesh, the sensuous appearances of things in the world; and as she records what corresponds to this, her deep disinclination to believe any longer in the self of psychoanalysis and the academic intellectuals—in the self as the New York literary culture conceives it.

There is a sense of worried attack and of some fussiness in the rather theoretical essays in the book—"Against Interpretation," "On Style," and "One Culture and the New Sensibility"—a solemn grinding-away at favorite obsessions. At the end of the essay on Lukács, after Miss Sontag defends "the notion of art as autonomous form": "There is certainly much that is valuable in the historicist approach. But if form may be understood as a certain kind of content, it is equally true (and perhaps more important to say now) that all content may be considered as a device of form." This notion (the trumph of style over content) is the central, anxious, overstated notion of the book, a way of protecting art from the intellectuals who want it to yield moral argument, or from the philistines who impose on it their "genteel-moralistic judgments." (Neither of whom, by the way, come into view in their proper persons.) Miss Sontag's unexceptionable

[1] AGAINST INTERPRETATION, by *Susan Sontag*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $4.95.

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idea is that art does not answer our questions, or administer to our need of morality, but "is something" in the world, that it has to do with engaging consciousness in certain kinds of pleasurable activities. Some notion of the free consciousness—serene, gay, impregnable, settled into steady awareness—is the ideal, as far as I can make out, to which she holds; one that leads to a rejection of "psychology," realism, "subject-matter" or "content" (generally in quotation marks, as if it were inept simply to utter the words), all of which it is easy to toss away nowadays—too easy, if anything. She is constantly telling us, for example, that "content" in art is "the pretext, the goal, the lure"—"the device of form." And that the intelligence of art (or, possibly, the style) annihilates "subject-matter" (or, possibly, "content"). Some of the examples she points to are odd. About the Nazi film by Leni Riefenstahl, *The Triumph of the Will,* she says that " 'content' has . . . come to play a purely formal role," and one wonders what she can possibly mean, since the "grace and sensuousness" that she admires in the film are inseparable from what the film is about, the celebration of Nazi power and of a brutal warrior-caste on which it rests. Miss Sontag reminds us that "a work of art is an experience, not a statement or an answer to a question," but *The Triumph of the Will,* precisely because the images it sets before us are so dark and mercurial and devastating to the imagination, communicates a quite simple statement: that everything must, and will, give way to the Nazi incorporation of power, that this power is in the service of demonic will. Who would have thought otherwise?

Miss Sontag wants us to look elsewhere than to "content," by which she thinks we are mesmerized, and this is why she is especially happy with the nonliterary arts and is especially herself when she discusses them; she reprobates the novel—it is laggard in throwing over the baggage of "content." And of course she would be quite right to draw our attention to features of works of art that we ignore in smashing through to the center, to moral argument, or meaning, statement, "content," call it what we will. Indeed, in the pieces on Godard, Resnais, and Bresson, she is very good at helping us understand the role played by form in their films; although she sees the deliberate asceticism of the images of persons in Bresson's films, the power they have to deflect our sympathy and imaginative identification, as telling us finally "about the most serious way of being human." One sees that she is not afraid of a statement when it is her kind of statement; in this case one that registers a fastidious and aristocratic rejection of the "mess" of consciousness, a statement of a rigorous anti-romanticism. She will have things her own way, as she must, but some confusion results; and particularly over the assumption that gives the underpinning to her impatience with "interpretation"—or at least the kind of interpretation which she holds to impoverish a work of art by fixing a neat order of meaning on it. There is a certain aristo-

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cratic disdain for the critics, based on misunderstanding, I think, and it is shored up by existentialist insistence on the priority of simple unmediated consciousness (this corresponding, in the criticism of works of art, to phenomenological "description") and the dignity of what stands apart from us in its imposing otherness.

The assumption is that we are all of us dark Hebrew spirits looking for moral enlightenment, or worse, moral edification, from works of art, incapable of appreciating what is playful, mocking, vivacious, stylized, etc., or what is simply luminous in the presence it occupies before us. (This is wrong in part, since the ironists we have all been taught to become would be frightened to death of "edification." But no matter. One sees the polemical point, even if its object is, again, a strawman philistine.) And so we summarily reject, or are put off by, what does not administer to some conception we hold of serious art, what does not yield to the demands of the "moral imagination." But we are not as darkly Hebrew in our demands as Miss Sontag makes out, and no great battle has to be fought in the name of a Greek view of art. Does she want us to battle for a sensibility responsive to what she calls "(new) modes of vivacity"?—for one that would be "defiantly pluralistic"? If anything, we are too easily pluralistic, and move dumbly and pleasurably from Bach to the Beatles, approving of ourselves as we move haphazardly along, and finding strange continuities on the way. What is the issue, after all? Freedom from sociological and psychological cant about pop culture? We are free so long as we attend to the sources of pleasure, and of edification, around us, and do not tell lies about them, or swamp them in the higher cant of talk about "shock therapy" and the awakening of the senses.

Worried by the preoccupation of the critics with a cold and laborious exegesis of "meaning" in works of art, Miss Sontag wants to attack both their zeal and their errors of reductionism, but all that she produces—besides the existentialist and phenomenological emphasis that I have already noted—is the view that art today is "a new kind of instrument, an instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing modes of sensibility." And since this is not exactly a novel view, one wonders about the "new" here. I would have thought that art has always been capable of doing what Miss Sontag says it does today—Dante no less than the Beatles. Is my consciousness not "modified" when Dante places before me the Christian transvaluation of experience by grace, or the Beatles their sly dead-pan faces, ingratiatingly immune before all the thunder they generate? All of modern culture conspires to outmode and constantly generate new modes of sensibility, to give us access to an enormous range of emotional life, personal style, identity. (The disease from which we are suffering is precisely our ability to imagine so easily, so fatally, some gross metamorphosis of the personal life; and this imagination is a product of the machinery of sensation, of huge surpluses of pleasure available

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outside the work-a-day world we inhabit and believe in less and less.) The "new sensibility" is Miss Sontag's cultural theme, but it is a flimsy theme, I think; and what is offered in its behalf is too hortatory to bear much examination: lists of names, historical précis, and stabbing references to the authors of our liberation. Why must she give us another cultural theme—"Is there a new sensibility?"—another catchword in search of its redeeming reality? So much in Miss Sontag's celebration of the "new sensibility" is a matter, after all, of standing on their heads received ideas about the humanistic uses of art, of fighting off the dark Hebrews who, suspicious of pleasure, stand guard jealously over the individual life.

The answer is that Miss Sontag is sick to death of "individuals," and of the novel in so far as it celebrates the individual life, or in some nineteenth-century realistic mode, the morality of the individual life. Hence her attraction to Artaud and to the literature of "violence, insanity, nightmare," and to the cool suicidal ego of Michel Leiris, of whom she says revealingly that his novel *Manhood* rejects "the rationalist project of self-understanding . . . ." So the "new sensibility" that *Against Interpretation* advertises somewhat weakly, at moments naïvely, is meant by Miss Sontag ultimately to oppose a whole mode of understanding individuals in Western society, and the literary culture which sponsors such understanding. Indeed, Miss Sontag is committed to the Lawrentian project of the transcendence of the Ego, as is Marshall McLuhan, whose Catholic (i.e., post-individualistic) aesthetic of our salvation has had some influence on Miss Sontag. So she places a high valuation on images of the soul's ultimate poverty, its estrangement and deprivation, and she is immensely attracted by art that through a severe reduction of means gives us, as she puts it, the "inexplicably transparent" surfaces of life —an art that rejects our immersion in the depths of agonized feeling or the documentary reportage we have loved to cram into the novel. And she says about the heroes of Robert Bresson's films: "Consciousness of self is the 'gravity' that burdens the spirit; the surpassing of the consciousness of self is 'grace,' or spiritual lightness." There are moments when she is perilously close to celebrating the divine silence of non-being, a purity of the image, of expressive means, of human improvidence, that corresponds, I would imagine, to something ardently disenchanted, cool, and pessimistic in her own sensibility. And at such moments we can see from what source she derives the insistence on stylization, artifice, theatricality, and emotional distance that marks the book as a whole, and that makes of it a whole book.

Still, it is a sign of how beleaguered, how timid, the free sensibility has become that Miss Sontag must find its symbol in Camp, that the piece for which she is best known should join the aestheticism of an Oscar Wilde to the scholasticism of a new cultus. More: that Miss Sontag should tell us that she fears for the Camp within her

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soul and so must explore her ambivalence toward it. We grant her the ambivalence, since it would be notorious to be straight about Camp. But she is awfully serious in her wittily analytic way, as serious as she is about the arts of "radical juxtaposition," which we may think quite un-novel at this late stage in the game. After all, collages are coming in these days by the thousands, and we have long been relishing odd "juxtapositions" of image, color, word, and texture. We have been living with domesticated surrealism for a long time; and the planned assaults on the senses—on the audience which offers itself so generously to the assault—that Miss Sontag approves of in the name of our awakening from "a massive sensory anesthesia": these appear today like the solemn parodies enacted by idolators and pedants of outrage. That we must still be shook-up, assaulted, made to squirm guiltily before an art, or mock-art, that would deliver us from our long sleep, is testimony only to the fact that the identical mock-battles must be fought over and over again. "Happenings" are pretty small potatoes, surely, a mock-art with a mock-aggressiveness toward its audience, and in fact representative of a kind of feeding off the butt-ends of old modernist techniques that is noticeable in many of the arts today.

Miss Sontag says in one of the best of her many aphorisms that we stand in need of an "erotics of art" rather than a hermeneutics—an art celebrating in a free and direct way the moving sensuous surfaces of things and people. Film gives her a model of the new aesthetic (and morality) in action, and the pieces on film sketch it out. Film denies the self and returns us to the mysterious presence of the body; it is par excellence the erotic art. One feels that Miss Sontag would like this knowledge—deliciously bitter and liberating, as she finds it—to yield an attack on the literary culture (New York genus) which nourishes her essays, for example, on Camus and Simone Weil. But she is not yet ready for a frontal attack; she is much less daring than Marshall McLuhan, who in his extreme moods seems ready to write off the culture we have produced under the aegis of print as so fallen that even the cool images of TV may be unable to redeem it. And the fact is that Miss Sontag is best when she is least theoretical, when she shows us how to appreciate a film that means a good deal to her. The scholasticism of the notes on Camp remains to warn us of the dilemmas of the "new sensibility"; all we see here of an "erotics of art" is a sweetly narcissistic phase, the rituals of self-love. In any case, as Miss Sontag seems to have known, Camp was doomed in advance to being fed into the mass media; and it emerges now, quite predictably, to enter into various games of one-upmanship. But what is embodied of Miss Sontag in these essays is more valuable by far than Camp: the image we have of a "spiritual style" to which she is drawn, and her commitment to the restraint and indeed the poverty of a kind of "formalism" over which she meditates again and again.

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